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Negotiating Dramatic Character in Aeschylean Drama

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Negotiating Dramatic Character in Aeschylean Drama

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Negotiating Dramatic Character in Aeschylean Drama

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I argue in this dissertation that the plays of Aeschylus are best understood as appeals to their predominantly male fifth-century Athenian audience centered around the presentation of dramatic character. I maintain that an examination of the *Persians*, *Seven against Thebes*, and *Suppliants* in these terms reveals that these plays are not primitive, static, or simplistic plays from early in Aeschylus' career, but rather dramatically complex and mature works. More broadly, I assert that character studies are not hopelessly outdated nor at odds with audience-centered and cultural studies. By combining these approaches, we gain a fuller understanding of how playwrights composed the plays and how spectators responded to them. I also assert that divergent responses to dramas based on individual experiences are not only the rule for spectators of tragedy, but directly influence how playwrights approached their dramatic characters.

The Introduction includes theoretical background for spectators' relationship to dramatic characters culled from film theory and an application of its general principles to the *Oresteia*. In chapter 1, I examines how the *Persians* invites spectators to experience a range of potentially contradictory emotional states that include fear of the Persian invaders and sympathy with the inhabitants of the Persian Empire, with the men who fought against them in the war, and perhaps even with Xerxes himself. In Chapter 2, I

show how, initially, the *Seven against Thebes* strongly implies, but does not establish beyond a doubt, that Eteocles is a paragon of Greek manhood and a noble defender of his city with whom Athenian spectators could identify. Questions about Eteocles emerge, however, when the play introduces Polyneices' accusations of injustice against him, points to increasing similarities between the brothers, and shows how their fates have long since been sealed by their father's curse and by the will of Apollo. In Chapters 3 and 4, I argue that the portrayal of the Danaids in the *Suppliants* is intentionally ambiguous. Spectators may have known that the Danaids would kill the Aegyptids, but the play offers vague and contradictory evidence regarding them and their situation to generate suspense in this early play of the trilogy.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION

I.1 THE LION PARABLE: JUDGING CHARACTER

Though composed late in Aeschylus' career and before the plays with which this dissertation will primarily be concerned, the lion parable in the *Agamemnon* offers insight into how Aeschylus might have thought about his dramatic characters and how spectators would perceive them. It illustrates how those evaluating a character can be deceived by outward indications, how a character's true nature can lie hidden or dormant, and how the revelation of a character's true self over time can bring about surprising, and sometimes tragic, developments.[1] In the moments before Agamemnon takes the stage and in the midst of an ode that speaks of Helen and the destruction she brought down on Trojans and Greeks alike, of impious deeds producing more deeds like themselves, of old *hybris* producing new *hybris*, and of black ruin that belongs to a household, the Chorus sings of a lion adopted by a man into his household. As a cub, the lion is gentle and playful (721-26). With time, however, it reverts to its true nature (the ἦθος τὸ πρὸς τοκέων, "character from its parents"[2]) and destroys the household from the inside out.

The story shows the importance of being able to accurately evaluate those around us, the difficulties associated with it, and the dangers associated with doing so incorrectly. The lion's motivation is the same in both cases: it is a hungry animal.[3] But the lion's nature expresses itself in very different ways depending upon its circumstances.

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[1] According to Harriot 1982: 13, the parable shows how people "can be mistaken about the true nature of a creature." Peradotto 1969: 256 notes that this is Aeschylus' most explicit discussion of character (ἦθος).

[2] ἦθος ("character") is in fact Conington's emendation ἔθος ("habit, manner"), which appears in the manuscripts. Because it is an emendation it is probably best not to put to much weight on this term in one's interpretation. The idea of a "true" or "underlying nature" can, however, be understood whether we are speaking of the "character" or the "manner" that the lion inherited from its parents.

[3] Cf. ἰνιν…ἀγαλακτον…φιλόμαστον, "an offspring without milk from the breast it needed," γαστρὸς ἀνάγκαις, "because of its stomach's needs," δαῖτ' ἀκέλευστος ἔτευξεν, "unbidden, he prepared a feast."

The man in the parable fails to grasp this and pays dearly for it. This "lesson" is applied directly to the world of men when, shortly after singing the parable, the Chorus warns Agamemnon of those who pretend to empathize but feel no emotion (790-2) and those who, like the lion cub, "fawn over a man with fleeting affection" (ὑδαρεῖ σαίνειν φιλότητι, 795-8).[4] The issues addressed in the story of the lion cub find undeniable expression in the plot of the *Agamemnon* and of the *Oresteia*,[5] but the parable also heralds a wider interest in the perception of character that is evident in all of the extant plays of Aeschylus.[6]

This dissertation argues that the manipulation of spectators' perception of dramatic characters lies at the heart of Aeschylus' dramatic art. As with the lion in the parable, Aeschylus misrepresents, conceals, and reveals the underlying nature of his characters and their actions over the course of his plays to generate surprise, curiosity, anticipation, and apprehension about characters and stories that would have been familiar from traditional myths and history. The majority of Aeschylus' spectators knew the myths from which the tragedies were derived, and they would have known going into a performance more or less what was going to happen and who was going to be involved.

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[4] Lebeck 1971: 50 notes the connection between the parable and the advice.

[5] Knox 1952 uses verbal parallels to show how the parable applies "officially" to Helen but can also be extended to Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Aegisthus, and Orestes. See also Lebeck 1971: 50. Nappa 1994 reports the argument of Schulze in favor of the scholia's view that Paris is the "primary referent" of the parable, but he admits that there are others. For other interpretations of the parable, see Knox 1952: 18, according to whom the parable illustrates the "reappearance of evil from generation to generation"; for Nappa 1994: 85 it illustrates "violence directed against the family or household." Lebeck 1971: 48 suggests that the parable offers a transition from Helen's story to the theme of hereditary guilt. According to Paradotto 1969: 256, the parable shows that the source of "inherited guilt" is in fact "inherited ἦθος." Rose 1992: 215, 219 goes one step further: he proposes that the idea of ἦθος can be applied to an entire class and argues that the parable illustrates the evils associated with "the inherited privileged status of these wealthy, powerful aristocrats."

[6] Knox 1952: 17 hints at the greater possible significance of the passage, observing that "[t]he lioncub parable is a separate unity formally marked off from its context, and this, together with its emphatic position, central in the central stasimon of the tragedy, suggests that its meaning is of more than local importance."

The simple construction of the action in Aeschylus' plays, sometimes criticized for being "static,"[7] would have done little to help in this regard. Yet when we evaluate scenes that depict little or no action in terms of what spectators knew and what they would have expected of the characters and examine how Aeschylus corroborates, undermines and reverses these expectations, we see that the plays are in fact filled with dynamic reversals and recognitions.[8] In other words, Aeschylus' plays can profitably be read in terms of how each new development affects spectators' view of the principal dramatic characters. Reading the plays in this way, one can appreciate the function of encounters and events that do little to advance the plot and for which critics have often had trouble finding a convincing explanation. Spectators' reaction to the dramatic characters would also have greater implications. The manipulation of their perception of characters is the source not only of many of the plays' dramatic effects, but also of their emotional effects. Spectators' opinion of the characters directly affects how they respond to the actions depicted on stage. Revelations about a character can affect which characters spectators support and which characters they would see succeed, but new developments can also change their emotional response to what has and what will happen (i.e., the plot).

This dissertation investigates Aeschylus' dramatic techniques by examining how his audience, composed predominantly of male fifth-century Athenians, would have responded to the plays and their characters.[9] In order to appreciate how these spectators' perception of and emotional response to the characters shift over the course of the play,

[7] Cf. Broadhead 1960: xxxix and Dawe 1963: 30, both of whom are speaking of the *Persians*.
[8] Cf. the view of Aristotle in the *Poetics* that "reversal" (*peripeteia*) and "recognition" (*anagnorisis*) are solely a function of the plot (1450a).
[9] Lloyd-Jones 1972: 219 observes that "a Greek tragedy is a play, written to be acted in a theatre and designed to have a particular effect upon its audience," a fact that "could not fail to distress those who are accustomed to treat it as though it were an ethical or metaphysical treatise."

we need a systematic account of their relationship to dramatic characters. In the first part of the introduction, I present an approach to spectators' sympathies that addresses not only whom spectators sympathize or fail to sympathize with, but why. This approach draws from the work of Cognitive Film Theorists Murray Smith and Noël Carroll. In the second part, I discuss Aeschylus' relationship to his audience and address the particular issues facing critics dealing with audience response in Greek tragedy. These include the cultural and generic assumptions with which Aeschylus' audience came to the tragedies and the particular ways in which a playwright might utilize and guide these expectations. Finally, I use the *Oresteia*, our only extant connected trilogy, both as a test case for my approach and to establish some principles that can be applied to Aeschylus' treatment of first, second, and third plays in trilogies when the surrounding plays in a trilogy are lost to us, as in the case of the *Suppliants* and the *Seven*.

PART II: SPECTATORS AND DRAMATIC CHARACTERS

II.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTERS IN GREEK TRAGEDY

Critics have routinely underestimated the fundamental importance of dramatic characters in Greek drama (Lloyd-Jones 1972: 216 on Tycho von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1917; Dawe 1963: 22). The root of the problem is likely Aristotle's famous assertion that character (i.e., *ethos* and *dianoia*) is secondary to action (cf. *Poet*. 1450a16-27, 1450a38-b1), championed influentially by Jones (1980).[10] Yet Aristotle elsewhere

[10] I admit that I do not entirely understand the insistence that action is always primary and that characters can only be of the sort that would do such and such an action, for which see Jones 1980: 30, 114 and Rosenmeyer 1982: 214-5. Halliwell 1986: 153, 151-2, 152 n.21 Whether the human representatives exist for the sake of defining their actions or the actions exist for the sake of exploring the nature of their agents is, it seems to me, a function as much of the way individual spectators view dramas as of the intentions of

acknowledges that character and action are closely linked (cf. 1449b36-50a4 with the comments of Lucas 1968: 100 and Halliwell 1986: 144, and 1450b3-4),[11] and Halliwell is undoubtedly correct in interpreting Aristotle's statement that a tragedy can be composed of action without character (1450a16-27) to mean not that there is no character to be found, but rather that the choices that reveal the nature of the dramatic figures are never explicitly treated and must be inferred from their actions (Halliwell 1986: 153, 151-2, 152 n.21). In practice, tragedies that focus on complex and exciting action often present the most clearly defined characters and rely on the most obvious characterization techniques, including soliloquies (or their equivalent) and conventional character types (e.g., the avenging hero, the savior, the evil tyrant).

Casting characters in a new light, i.e., giving them new motives, mindsets, and circumstances, is one of the most fundamental ways that tragedians can reinvent their mythical source material without drastically altering the actions and events that define the stories. The story of Clytemnestra killing Agamemnon upon his homecoming will take on different connotations and have a very different effect upon its audience depending on whether she is a divine avenger or an adulterous wife and whether he is a noble war hero or an incompetent tyrant. Similarly, it is an entirely different story if Orestes has divine support to kill his mother or if he does not, if the Erinyes are monsters or the backbone of

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the playwright. But cf. Smith 1995: 21, 31, who argues that because spectators understand the characters on stage to be 'human analogues' endowed with, among other things, "self-awareness," "beliefs," "desires," and "emotions," "[r]ather than agents coming into being as the result of actions, as the structuralists, and indeed Aristotle, argue, actions themselves may stand out because they are performed by fictional human agents…."

[11] Cf. also Jones 1980: 36; Lloyd-Jones 1972: 218; Rosenmeyer 1982: 36; Gould 1978: 43; Halliwell 1986: 149; Heath 1987: 116-7; Blundell 1989: 17; Easterling 1993: 58, 62. Pfister 1988: 160, taking into account a broader conception of character that includes their relationship to other characters (i.e. status and circumstances), observes that "[i]f plot is defined as a series of changes in a situation, and situation as a given relationship that exists between a number of figures both to each other and to a concrete or ideal context, then the dialectical relationship linking plot and figure becomes obvious."

a just society, if the Danaids are cold-blooded murderesses or kill their husbands on their wedding night in self-defense, if the men who took part in the invasion of Greece with the Persians are godless barbarians or victims of Xerxes, and if Eteocles is defending his city when he kills his brother or a crazed victim of his father's curse.[12]

The actions and events depicted in Greek tragedy have no meaning without reference to their "actors" and victims. Tragedians' source material gives them a set of actions and events to work with, including murders, battles, deceptions, and supplications, and, in one sense, altering the nature of the characters who do these things or are affected by them is merely one of the tools that tragedians can use to influence how spectators think about these actions.[13] But, on a fundamental level, spectators cannot judge what is happening without recourse to the nature of the characters engaged in the action. What characters do is perhaps the most reliable source of evidence regarding their nature, and actions often carry with them implicit assumptions regarding their actors.[14] Generally speaking, sparing innocent victims is good, abusing the helpless is bad, and so on. These judgments are complicated, however, by the fact that acts are defined in large part by the status and circumstances of those involved (See *Poet*. 1454a19-24 and Belfiore 1992: 95).[15] Without reference to these factors, the category of

[12] The fact that, at one time or another, all of these portrayals are presented as real possibilities in the plays of Aeschylus is an indication of the complexity of his approach to his dramatic characters.
[13] In this sense, and, I argue, in this sense alone, the characters can be thought to be secondary to the action.
[14] Aristotle acknowledges that actions can illustrate "choice" and thus "character." See above. Gagarin 1976: 5-7 argues that the Greeks were interested not so much in intentions and motives as "in the actions themselves and their consequences." They did not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary actions, but adhered to a system of "strict liability." It seems safer to say that the Greeks had implicit assumptions about the mindset and motives associated with certain actions. Certain behaviors are considered wrong regardless of the circumstances (taboo) not because societies are uninterested in the motives of those who commit them, but because they cannot imagine (or refuse to consider) a motive that would justify the act.
[15] Belfiore suggests that unlike ἦθος in the *Poetics*, Aristotle's use of ἦθος in the *Rhetoric* "includes characterizations of age, sex, and nationality, as well as disposition (*Rhet*. 3.7.1408a25-29) (98)." Blundell 1992 holds a similar view.

human beings killing other human beings, for instance, encompasses acts with as broad a range of ethical significance as a soldier defending his homeland against invaders, a husband killing an adulterer, a parent exposing a handicapped child, and a master punishing a slave (acts which would be considered somewhere between admirable and acceptable in ancient Greece) and, on the other hand, generally abhorrent acts such as a father sacrificing his daughter, matri-, patri-, and fratricide, and an adulterous wife killing her husband.[16] Furthermore, Greek tragedy regularly explores the ethical significance of actions, particularly actions that are unthinkable and taboo. It demands that its spectators weigh the significance of one action against another and forces spectators to make finer distinctions and more complex evaluations that include actors' "motives, purposes, principles, [and] policies" (Belfiore 1992: 88-9).[17] For this information, spectators can look to what characters say; this amounts to Aristotle's "character" (ἦθος) and "thought" (διάνοια) as defined in the *Poetics*, namely the choices (προαιρέσεις) that reveal what dramatic characters are like (ποιοί τινες) and the words that reveal the way they think (1448a2, 1449b38, 1450b4, 1450b8).[18] Aristotle does not, however, discuss what is often the most telling, if least straightforward, evidence regarding the nature of a character: what other characters say about them. This evidence is particularly interesting yet also problematic in that it requires spectators to evaluate both the information and its source

[16] It should already be clear that there is by no means a one-to-one correspondence between the ethical evaluations of ancient Greeks and modern Americans. Belfiore 1992: 89 offers a formulation similar to mine but argues that the distinction depends on *ethos*: "An act of killing, for example, is neither a heroic defense of one's country nor vicious treachery, if *ethos* is not added by the poet." One might add to this list acts done by the gods, which would further complicate matters.

[17] Cf. *Eu*. 426, in which Athena asks whether Orestes acted out fear or some other necessity. On the importance of these considerations, see Belfiore 1992: 88-9, who cites Arist. *EN* 1105a28-33, and Cairns 1993: 178. See also Carroll 1996: 105 and Smith 1995: 190.

[18] See Lucas 1968: 100, 106-7 and Blundell 1992 for discussions of Aristotle's conception of ἦθος and διάνοια.

(Cf. Pfister 1988: 186). Taken in combination, these indications, what characters do, what they say, and what is said about them, allow spectators to evaluate dramatic characters. As we will see, these evaluations are a crucial factor in determining how spectators respond emotionally to the characters and how the plays generate suspense, surprise, and other dramatic effects.

II.2 The Process of "Recognizing" Characters

One of the most important factors in understanding how spectators respond to dramatic characters is also the most obvious: the nature of dramatic characters, their circumstances, attitudes, motives, is not immediately apparent to spectators. Their nature emerges over the course of the performance as spectators accumulate information about them. It is subject to change.[19] Spectators begin to form provisional judgments about characters from the moment they see or even hear about them (cf. Butcher 1907: 323, Garton 1957: 247, and Smith 1995: 21-2).[20] With each new piece of evidence regarding a character, spectators either find their judgments corroborated, or they are forced to

[19] Cf. Smith 1995: 85: "[r]ecognition does not deny the possibility of development and change, since it is based on the concept of continuity, not unity or identity."

[20] Even before a word is spoken, spectators can determine from costumes, masks, and movements factors that will influence their judgments such as characters' gender, age, class, and nationality. Much of the evidence regarding these and other factors is, however, lost to us. With the exception of a few references to particular (and almost always later) performances, we have almost no evidence for acting conventions, movement, or gesture and next to nothing about the way that particular actors chose to play their roles, a factor that could have had a great effect on how the characters were perceived. We know nothing of performers' tone of voice, nor even if such subtleties could have been achieved given the necessity of projection and the limitations of the masks. Even the audience's relationship to the actor playing a part could affect their evaluation of the character. See Elam 1980 50, who reproduces Kowzam's list of factors that might define an actor's performance, for an indication of what we can know about Greek tragic performance, what we do not know, and what was not a factor (e.g., facial expression). Music is another factor, now lost, which might have affected how spectators responded to the Chorus and to characters who sang lyric songs. See Rash 1981 and Scott 1984 for attempts to reconstruct the role of music on the production of meaning in Aeschylus' tragedies.

reformulate them so as to take the new information into account.[21] Contradictory elements must be reconciled or at least registered. Smith calls the process through which spectators come to know dramatic characters "recognition."[22] The thinking behind the approach is essentially that of Reader-Response theorists who imagine a reader performing a "sequence of decisions, revisions, anticipations, reversals, and recoveries as he negotiates the text" (Tompkins 1980: xvi on Fish 1970).[23]

Because most spectators would have known the stories from which the tragedies were derived, Greek tragedy presents a unique case with regard to recognition in two ways. The first point is a technical one. If spectators are already familiar with a tragedy's characters and their stories, they will come to the performance with provisional judgments of the characters that they will revise on the basis of the evidence presented in the text. An appreciation of this aspect of tragic spectators' relationship with dramatic characters is often necessary to understand why Aeschylus presents his characters in a particular way, but it is often underplayed by critics, presumably because of the difficulty (if not impossibility) of knowing what exactly spectators knew going into a

[21] See Bentley 1964: 62; Beckerman 1970: 210-1; Styan 1975: 26; Elam 1980), 116; and Pfister 1988: 163 on how spectators' perception of characters in dramas change over the course of a performance.

[22] Smith 1995: 31 argues that spectators approach all human agents with a set of basic assumptions regarding their nature (including "self-awareness," "intentional states," and "emotions") which he calls the "person schema," so that "we do not inductively construct characters every time we watch a film via the simple accumulation of differential features (as both Greimas and Vernet imply). Character construction is thus a dynamic process in which the person schema and cultural models allow us to leap ahead of what we are given and form expectations…. Rather than agents coming into being as the result of actions, as the structuralists, and indeed Aristotle, argue, actions themselves may stand out because they are performed by fictional human agents, who are salient because of the person schema." For the idea that spectators respond to dramatic characters on the analogy of their experience with human beings in everyday life (albeit in a way tempered by genre conventions), see Smith 1995: 82, Rosenmeyer 1982: 212, Easterling 1990: 87 and 1993: 14 on "human intelligibility," Cairns 1993: 178, Goward 1999: 10, and Pfister 1988: 162. For the idea that spectators would not be beholden to the text alone but could use previous experiences both with literature and in daily life to "flesh out" characters, see Easterling 1993: 15.

[23] Cf. Iser 1978: 167. See Goward 1999: 21 for a treatment of Greek tragedy informed by Reader-Response Theory. See also Heath 1987: 59; Sourvinou-Inwood 1989: 135, and Kip, 1990: 19-20, all of whom warn against the tendency in critics to read later developments back into earlier scenes, thus ignoring the dramatic effect of the spectator's process of uncovering information.

performance.[24] The second issue is more essential and could drastically affect the way spectators think of the dramatis personae as a whole: most of a tragedy's spectators would have known going into a performance or quickly been able to grasp which characters would be at the center of the drama. At the outset of a new play treating an unfamiliar subject with invented characters, every character is potentially the focus around whose actions and experiences the play is constructed.[25] Spectators have to sift through each of the characters using factors such as the relative time they spend on stage, how many lines they speak, how many lines are spoken about them, conventional character-types, and the degree to which they are presented in a sympathetic light.[26] Aeschylus' spectators, on the other hand, could have guessed from previous versions of the story (and from the first two plays of the trilogy) that Eteocles' and Polyneices' struggle would be at the center of the *Seven*; they would have known that the *Suppliants* and its trilogy would treat the Danaids' struggle against the Aegyptids; they could be relatively sure that Agamemnon and Clytemnestra would be focus of the *Agamemnon*,

[24] Cf. the view of Dodds 1966: 40 that "[w]hat is not mentioned in the play does not exist" (though Dodds is there speaking not of mythical variants but of concerns from "real life" that might affect believability) and the view of Fraenkel 1950: 57 that "[i]t must be regarded as an established and indeed a guiding principle for any interpretation of Aeschylus that the poet does not want us to take into account any feature of a tradition which he does not mention." Fraenkel is undoubtedly right that in most cases Aeschylus wants spectators to focus on what is being said and done at a given moment. Yet I would suggest that Aeschylus often makes his characters say and do things because of what his *spectators* might be thinking at that time. Gibert 1995: 41 n.47 calls Fraenkel's position "a corrective to extravagant interpretation" but notes that "few today would try to follow it to the letter."

[25] The title, if announced before the performance, may have given spectators some indication of who would be at the play's center. Halliwell 1986: 217, 217 n.21 argues on the basis of *Poetics* 13 that Aristotle envisions "dramatic concentration on a single, central tragic figure." I would extend the number to two in some cases.

[26] The identity of the actors may also have helped spectators determine which part would be the focus of the play. See Pfister 1988: 165-6 on the ways in which spectators distinguish "central" and "peripheral" characters.

and so on.[27] As a result, spectators would have a tendency to look to other characters not for their own sake, even though they are occasionally objects of interest in their own right, but because of the light they can shed on the tragedy's principal figures.[28] Thus, these principal characters need not be sympathetic nor even present to hold spectators' interest. Spectators' desire to know why (or if) Clytemnestra kills her own husband, why Orestes kills her, and why Eteocles kills his own brother ensures that these principal characters will be at the center of the tragedy.

Although the characters do not themselves change,[29] without exception Aeschylus' extant plays strongly encourage, if not require, their spectators to revise their initial judgments of principal characters sometimes once, sometimes multiple times, over the course of a performance. In the *Agamemon* and the *Suppliants*, both first plays in their respective trilogies, the depiction of Clytemnestra and the Danaids shifts so often, and the portraits are so contradictory, that spectators may never feel comfortable passing

[27] If the subject matter of these plays was not immediately clear from their titles, it would have been cleared up within a few minutes of the performance.

[28] Cf. Heath 1987: esp. 90-97, who argues that in most cases spectators' focus shifts with their sympathies. See below. See Rosenmeyer 1982: 216-7 on the role of the Watchman and the Nurse in the *Agamemnon* and *Choephori*. Spectators' overriding interest in the principal characters would not, however, preclude them from occasionally thinking about matters from the perspective of a secondary character. See Griffith 1998: 36, according to whom, "[t]hrough the medium of tragedy, the audience comes to experience a series of shifting subject positions and multiple levels of engagement that may allow several different, even competing, impulses to coexist and be satisfied, both within the citizen body as a whole, and within each audience member."). Cassandra in the *Agamemnon* is a particularly good example of this phenomenon. She is a sympathetic character who rivets the audience's attention. Yet I argue that she serves primarily to paint Clytemnestra in a negative light and recall the curse of the house of Atreus. Io in the *Prometheus Bound* is also good example of this approach.

[29] Pfister 1988: 177 distinguishes between "static figures," who "remain constant throughout the whole of the text" and "never change, though of course the receiver's perception of them may gradually develop, expand or even change under the influence of the inevitable linear process of information transmission and accumulation." and "dynamic figures," who "undergo a process of development in the course of the text." Aeschylus' characters are almost exclusively of the static variety. Cf. Rosenmeyer 1982: 227 and 231: "none of [Aeschylus' characters] experience the inner struggles, the pangs of conscience, the second thoughts that Euripides was the first to put on the stage." See Gill 1983 on character development in the Greek literary tradition.

final judgment and would thus be forced to wait in suspense for the next play.[30] The *Choephori* initially lulls spectators into believing that they know everything necessary to evaluate Orestes and the murder of his mother only to call this assumption into question abruptly in its final scene, likewise leaving spectators in suspense. The *Eumenides* and the *Seven*, the final plays in their trilogies, and the stand-alone *Persians*, in contrast, gradually shift spectators' perception of their main characters, allowing them time to process the change and achieve a sense of finality. In every case, these shifts are made possible by the fundamental ambiguity of judging other human beings in the plays of Aeschylus and, to some degree, in daily encounters. Absent are the conventions developed in modern and ancient drama and film to overcome human beings' lack of transparency, such as monologues, soliloquies and voice-overs (cf. Gould 1978: 47, 49). Aeschylus' characters rarely reveal their innermost thoughts to confidants, as does Phaedra, for instance, to her servant in Euripides' play. Aeschylus' characters speak and act in the public sphere (cf. Rosenmeyer 1982: 213; Gould 1978: 47). Spectators are forced to judge them as they would a litigant or political figure,[31] i.e., based on their account of themselves and others' account of them, both of which are subjective and open to question. There is no narrator. As demonstrated by events in the *Choephori* and in the *Eumenides*, there are no objective pronouncements from the gods in Aeschylus; his

[30] Cf. Pfister 1988: 180-1, who, following Bentley 1964, distinguishes between "closed figures," concerning whom the spectator "regards the defining set of information as complete without any insuperable contradictions within it" and "open figures," who are "enigmatic" either because spectators do not have enough information about them or because the information they do have is contradictory." Under this reading, Clytemnestra and the Danaids would clearly fall into the "open" category, although, as I have suggested, almost all of Aeschylus' main characters are to some degree "open."

[31] Ober and Strauss 1990: 238 note the similarities of the "spatial organization" of "the physical settings for mass meetings of the people—the Pnyx and the Theater of Dionysos" and of the setting in which "the mass audience faced, listened to, and actively responded to, the public discourse of individual speakers."

choruses, unlike those of many of the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, are often direct participants in the action and thus open to the same kind of scrutiny as other characters.

Shifts in the depiction of dramatic characters can serve a variety of functions depending on how they are deployed throughout the tragedies. In a genre based on familiar figures and their stories, shifts keep spectators off guard. Presenting a drastically different portrayal of characters than the one with which most spectators are familiar at a play's outset warns spectators that they do not know everything there is to know and that the play is not merely a dramatization of a famous myth. It suggests the possibility of innovation, forces spectators to pay attention, and generates interest in familiar characters. Vacillation throughout a play between two different portrayals of a character can generate suspense as to whether a famous act from myth will be portrayed in a positive or negative light. Drastic revelations in which admirable characters turn out to be shameful or shameful characters admirable can surprise spectators and force them to reevaluate both what they hope will happen and how they think about what has already happened. Shifts can introduce new threats to previously secure situations, or offer unforeseen sources of safety.

Almost every scene in Aeschylus' plays reveals a new and unexpected aspect of a dramatic character, and it is clear that he was utterly unconcerned with presenting characters in a consistent way. Nevertheless, the characters presented on stage are not "inconsistent" (cf. Dawe 1963: 22). Nor is their unity sacrificed for the sake of achieving the greatest dramatic effect on a scene-by-scene basis.[32] Aeschylus' dramatic characters

[32] This is the view of Wilamowitz 1917 and Howald 1930. See Garton 1957: 248-9 and 1972: 394-397 and Goldhill 1986: 17 for discussions of their views. See Dawe 1963: 21-4, Lloyd-Jones 1972: 217, and Court 1994: 9-10 for discussions of Wilamowitz's position. Cf. Easterling 1993: 13-14 for a criticism of them.

are like real people in this respect: big enough to encompass inconsistencies and contradictions.[33] They do not change to accommodate the action; rather, they appear now in one way, now in another to change the way that spectators think about the action. And while Aeschylus uses shifts in the depiction of his characters to achieve dramatic effects, the plays' overall effect depends on challenging spectators' expectations based on what previous scenes led them to believe about the characters.

II.3 Sympathy, Identification, and Allegiance

Critics of literature, drama, and film widely acknowledge that an audience's response to the characters in a story directly affects how they judge and respond emotionally to the actions and events that the story depicts. Although Aristotle never explicitly says as much in the *Poetics*, he acknowledges it when be observes that a shift from good fortune to bad will have a drastically different emotional effect upon the audience depending on whether the person undergoing the shift is good (ἐπιεικής) or shameful (πονηρός), deserving or undeserving (ἀνάξιος), distinguished from all others in virtue and justice (ἀρετῆι διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνηι) or "like the audience" (ὅμοιος) (1452b34-53a12).[34] Often, spectators are invited to sympathize with one particular dramatic character or group of characters such that they judge the action as it affects him, feeling concern for his welfare, "fearing for what may befall him, getting angry on his behalf, pitying him, feeling elated at his triumphs, and so forth" (Gaut 1999: 207; cf.

[33] Halliwell 1990: 36 observes that "we can trace from the beginnings of the Greek literary tradition a strong awareness of the ways in which the mind can contain disparate, even contradictory, forces, variable in the degree to which they can be subjected to conscious control."

[34] Belfiore 1992: 106, agrees that Aristotles' theory of character in tragedy has implicit moral and social elements, but accounts for Aristotle's failure to address explicitly the "moral" elements of tragedy by proposing that, in Aristotle's mind, "'moral' judgments lead us to praise or blame and thus interfere with the tragic emotions."

Blundell 1995: 7). Stanford offers a straightforward list "of conditions that should arouse *eleos* ["pity"] in an audience" culled from Aristotle and Apsines, among others: "poverty (especially after previous prosperity), sickness, old age, wounds, physical disabilities and deformities, mutilations, ugliness, hunger, exile, dishonour, loneliness, loss of *philoi*, captivity, abduction, childlessness, orphanhood, outrage and death" (1983: 25). Yet few would deny that the effect of seeing an unambiguous villain wounded, exiled, dishonored, or killed will not elicit the same level of pity, if it elicits any pity at all, as seeing a similar misfortune befall a character whom spectators have come to like or admire. Generally speaking, spectators will have a favorable emotional response to events that have a positive impact on characters with whom they sympathize or a negative impact on characters with whom they do not. They will have an unfavorable emotional response to events that have a negative impact on characters with whom they sympathize or a positive impact on characters with whom they do not.[35]

Critics generally describe this relationship between the audience and dramatic characters as one of "identification," a term that implies that spectators feel sympathy for dramatic characters in whose position they can or want to imagine themselves and with whose feelings they empathize.[36] Identification requires that audiences have insight into what characters are undergoing, and this may be why critics argue that audiences sympathize primarily with the characters from whose perspective the text is presented, that is, through whom the events are "focalized." Thus, audiences' sympathies will shift

[35] See Heath 1985: 81, 84, who cites Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1377b31-8a1) in support of the claim: "the attitudes of those who are well- or ill-disposed, angry or calm, are not the same, but differ either absolutely or in degree; if one is well-disposed towards the a man on whom one is passing judgment, one thinks he has done either no wrong or no serious wrong: but it ill-disposed, the opposite."

[36] Cf. Griffith 1998: 40, who describes "the (literary-critical) notion of an audience /reader's 'identification' with this or that character in a work of fiction, the 'hero/ine' or most 'sympathetic' character, whose experiences the audience is led to share, or aspire to, as if they were in some (temporary) sense their own.".

(if they shift at all) as their focus shifts from one character to another.[37] Griffith offers a more complex formulation according to which spectators are invited over the course of the play "to adopt different subject positions and indulge their fantasies" (1998: 39). These "subject positions" include

> at least three quite different perspectives on the action unfolding before it: (i) it empathizes with the ambitions or horrified anxieties of the leading character(s); (ii) it shares and enjoys the gods' or prophet's (and author's) ability to look down on those leaders, from a distance, as misguided and error-prone objects of pity or scorn; (iii) along with the fearful choral group or minor character, it gazes up at these leaders from below in wonder, as stupendously superior pillars of strength, ambition, and determination (1995: 73).[38]

Griffith's view is able to account for spectators' changing relationship to dramatic characters. Depending on personal preference, a spectator can inhabit any role at any time, in theory, and a playwright can change the way spectators think about a dramatic character by inviting them to inhabit a new role that carries with it a different perspective. He could do so by attributing desirable traits to the subject whose position he intended spectators to take up and undesirable traits to the subject from whom he intended them to withdraw. Yet, according to this view, spectators' evaluation of what they see would be

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[37] See, e.g., Heath 1987: 90-95 speaks of a "focus of sympathy" in which spectators' sympathies shift to whomever the play focuses its attention on. See also Lada 1993: 100 and Gibert 1995: 38-39. According to Smith 1995: 87, Booth, Bal, and Chatman "have all argued or implied that alignment with a character [i.e., "access to [characters'] actions, and to what they know and feel"] necessarily creates a basic sympathy for that character." See Silverman 1983: 201-36 for the concept of identification in psychoanalytic film theory that involves tying a shot directly to a character's gaze. One hardly needs to point out, however, that more time spent with another person and more insight into how they think does not always lead to a sympathetic judgment. Take, for example, Clytemnestra's speech to the Chorus of the *Agamemnon* in which she reveals that everything she has said up till then is a lie and that she is not ashamed to say it. The revelation certainly provides spectators with a deep and sincere insight into the way she thinks and feels but, because of its particular content, is unlikely to have won her any supporters. It is particularly with the figure of Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* that the model of Heath 1987 breaks down. She is a focal character at a number of points in the play, but Heath argues that she is never sympathetic because she is a "sinister figure who embodies the threat to Agamemnon" (20-21). This implies an entirely different set of criteria for sympathy.

[38] See Griffith 1995: 1998: 36-43 and 2001: 205 n.37 (with Bibliography).

in large part circumscribed by the response of characters presented within the play.[39] And, to the degree that this view foregrounds spectators' unconscious desires, it can be difficult to implement in practice.[40] It also suggests that spectators' appreciation of a tragedy (let alone their enjoyment) depends solely on their desire to inhabit one or all the roles that are presented to them, a theory that is difficult to prove decisively.[41]

Cognitive Film Theory offers an account of the sympathy that spectators feel for dramatic characters that is able to explain subtle shifts in sympathies that are not directly tied to the perspective of one character or another in the play.[42] Its approach envisions spectators more as observers of the action than participants and focuses directly on spectators' approval or disapproval of characters rather than the degree to which characters offer opportunities for wish fulfillment. According to Noël Carroll, "what is generally called identification is best explained in terms of an audience's allegiance to a given character on the ground that that character exemplifies personal virtues that the audience has a pro-attitude toward" (1996: 105 n.22). Sympathy and focus need have nothing to do with one another. Smith explicitly distinguishes between, on the one hand, "alignment," that is, the degree to which spectators' perception of the events on stage are tied to the perspective of a particular character ("*spatio-temporal attachment*") and to

[39] The viewpoint of the gods and prophets might allow for an appraisal of the action without reference to dramatic characters, but it is placed at odds with other viewpoints and is still tied to the author's perspective.

[40] Griffith 1998: 39 notes that "fantasies" and "imaginative possibilities…are notoriously hard to track and analyse empirically in any detail."

[41] See Smith 1995: 76-81 for a discussion of psychoanalytic approaches to spectatorship.

[42] Cognitive Film Theorists in general have been careful to point out the difference between sympathy and empathy. In the case of sympathy, according to the definition of Smith 1995: 103, "we cognitively recognize an emotion and then respond with a different but appropriate emotion based on our evaluation of the character." With empathy, "we simulate or experience the same affect or emotion experienced by the character" are not the same thing. See, e.g., Carroll 1990, Smith 1995: 76-81, Plantinga and Smith 1999: 13-14, and Gaut 1999: 203-6, though Gaut argues for an expanded notion of identification that could take this fact into account.

which they are given insight into what the character thinks and feels ("*subjective access*"),[43] and, on the other hand, spectators' "allegiance" to characters.[44]

If recognition involves uncovering dramatic characters' underlying nature, allegiance comes about when we judge them. According to Smith,

> To become allied with a character, the spectator must evaluate the character as representing a morally desirable (or at least preferable) set of traits, in relation to other characters within the fiction. On the basis of this evaluation, the spectator adopts an attitude of sympathy (or, in the case of a negative evaluation, antipathy) towards a character, and responds emotionally in an apposite way to situations in which this character is placed (1995: 188).

When spectators feel sympathy for dramatic characters, they are more disposed to feel pity for their misfortunes, fear on their behalf, and joy at their successes. Sympathy is not, however, simply a yes or no question. For both Carroll and Smith, sympathy is relative. It is always a matter of competition between characters, though in some cases a lopsided one.[45] Based on what spectators know of the characters at any point, spectators "construct moral structures, in which characters are organized and ranked in a system of preference" (Smith 1995: 84). In this way, characters who might not be intrinsically sympathetic can invite spectators' sympathies when presented in the company of utterly unsympathetic characters or when they are simply the most sympathetic character whom spectators have encountered. This is a straightforward idea, but one that will come up again and again in the examination of Aeschylus' tragedies.

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[43] Smith 1995: 144-5 notes that "[a]lignment is closely related to the concepts of 'point of view' and 'focalization' in literary theory."
[44] See Smith 1995: 6, 75, 83, 142-5.
[45] Cf. Carroll 1996: 104-5 and Smith 1995: 188, 191. See Vickers 1973: 382 on Aeschylus in particular. He who observes that "characters are to be evaluated not as separate individuals but as part of a group or system: a shift of balance affects the whole."

Spectators' approval or disapproval of dramatic characters is not limited to moral evaluations.[46] Spectators will often take characters' morality into account, and these considerations could have a noticeable impact on their evaluations (e.g., killing one's mother is *very* bad and would weigh heavily against a character, insulting the gods is disastrous, defending one's father's honor is admirable).[47] But spectators would also judge characters on less obvious factors similar to those they would consider in judging a person on the street. These considerations can extend to characters' political and religious viewpoints and their conformity to stereotypes and recognizable "types."[48] The significance of an indication will obviously vary depending on how heavily spectators weigh it (murdering someone is usually considered worse than a breach of etiquette), but generally speaking, qualities that spectators approve of will garner a positive response; qualities that they disapprove of will garner a negative response; conflicting indications must be reconciled with one another.

It goes without saying that spectators' judgments of dramatic characters will be subject to change as they learn more about them over the course of the drama. It may take some time before spectators feel that they have enough information to judge that the character is sufficiently sympathetic (i.e., more desirable than the other characters) to

[46] Cf. Smith 1995: 189 on the use of the term "moral": "I choose the word 'moral' rather than 'ideological' because, with respect to characters, ideological judgments are expressed as moral evaluations."
[47] See Carroll 1996: 105 and Russell 1990: 198,who observes that in the evaluation of people, "'good' and 'bad'…do not have a narrowly moral connotation; in most non-philosophical Greek thinking, acceptability and the reverse are largely determined by origin, social status, profession, or political sympathies." Heath 1987: 87n7 criticizes as "too narrow" the view of Stinton 1975: 239 that "[m]anipulating the sympathies of the audience to achieve the desired tragic effect is an important part of the dramatist's art, and he does it by adjusting the moral terms of the action," but Stinton goes on to expand audience sympathy to "stage-figures who have qualities such as we ourselves have or admire… though these may not in fact be moral qualities."
[48] Carroll 1996: 105, by way of example, observes that "[o]ften in Hollywood films, a character is designated as good in terms of his courteous, respectful, and thoughtful treatment of supporting characters, especially ones who are poor, old, weak, lame, oppressed, children, etc.—that is, characters who are in some sense the protagonist's inferiors, but whom the protagonist treats with consideration."

merit a level of allegiance. From that point on, there are (at least) three possibilities: 1) the play may continue to portray the character in a positive light, 2) it may reveal minor flaws that raise questions, but are not enough for spectators to withdraw their allegiance entirely, or 3) the play can seriously undermine its previous depiction.[49] In the first case, there is obviously no need for spectators to change the way they view the character or their expectations for the play and the actions it presents. In the second case, spectators initially may be willing to ignore sympathetic characters' potential flaws. If, however, flaws and negative qualities accumulate, other characters may emerge as more sympathetic or less problematic such that spectators will shift their allegiance to them and alter their expectations for the rest of the play. In a few cases, characters may do something so atrocious that it completely undermines their positive qualities, or spectators may learn they have been deceived by false indications. Spectators may then be forced to reevaluate entirely their thinking about what has already happened and what will happen in the play. In the *Choephori*, for example, the fact that Orestes appears to be punished by the gods for the murder of his mother forces spectators to rethink not only the murder that they were led to believe was ordered by the gods, but also perhaps their judgments of Clytemnestra. It should be noted that while this account (and the examination of the plays that follows) threatens to make character evaluation sound like a labored process in which spectators are forced to pause, turn away from the performance, and consider the repercussions of an action or utterance on their view of the cast of the play, in many cases, the response of a spectator which takes pages to examine thoroughly, would take place in a moment.

[49] Unsympathetic characters will go through a similar process, continuing to exhibit negative traits, exhibiting redeeming traits, or being wholly exonerated by new developments.

II.4 Alignment

As I have suggested, Smith and Carroll stress that the degree to which spectators see the world through the eyes of dramatic characters and know what they think, whether we call it focus or alignment, is independent of their allegiance to these characters. This is not to say, however, that spectators' alignment is entirely divorced from the process of eliciting their sympathies. There is no doubt that playwrights often invite spectators to feel allegiance to characters with whom they are aligned, and spectators may in fact have a tendency to feel more sympathy for these characters.[50] Insofar as spectators need a certain amount of information before they can pass judgment on a character, a level of acquaintance with their actions and their thinking is not only conducive to allegiance but also necessary (Smith 1995: 84).

In the plays of Aeschylus, the text often presents a situation initially from the perspective of one character or group of characters (i.e., places spectators in strict alignment with them) who present their side of the story in a way that is intended to appeal to spectators' sympathies. These one-sided presentations allow characters to pass over evidence that might call their account into question. To the degree that the characters on both sides of a situation are competing for spectators' sympathies, this technique drastically reduces the competition. Of course, allegiances built on strict alignment are particularly susceptible to being undermined when other perspectives are introduced, new information emerges, and the limitations and biases of the character with whom spectators were aligned come to light.

[50] Cf. Smith 1995: 188, though he is of course speaking of modern spectators of film.

We see instances of "one-sided presentation" in the first half of the *Seven*, which presents the Argive invasion from the perspective of Eteocles. He speaks at length of the opposing leaders' flaws, and of the women who will suffer at the hands of the Argives should Thebes fall. With the introduction of Polyneices' viewpoint, however, spectators are reminded of the broader context of their situation and questions arise regarding the justice of Eteocles' position. Similarly, throughout the first half of the *Choephori*, Orestes, Electra, and the chorus continually cast aspersions against Clytemnestra and portray themselves as her pitiable victims. The limits of their perspective are explored, however, at the end of the play and in the *Eumenides* when Orestes faces punishment for an act that initially appeared not only necessary, but just and divinely decreed. The *Suppliants* and the *Prometheus Bound* align spectators almost exclusively with their protagonists. They hold the stage throughout; the voice of the opposition is presented only by proxy. There is reason to believe that the plays that followed the *Suppliants* would have followed the pattern of the *Seven* and the *Choephori*, presenting the alternate viewpoint of the Aegyptids, who would offer their side of the story and draw attention to flaws in the Danaids' position that may not have been immediately apparent to spectators.[51] In none of these plays, however, are potential shifts in the depiction of their protagonists entirely unheralded. Despite spectators' strict alignment with the views of Eteocles, the Danaids, and Orestes, potentially questionable viewpoints and potentially incriminating evidence with regard to these characters, i.e., "gaps, ambiguities or unresolved contradictions" in their accounts and possibly redeeming qualities in their

[51] This appears to be remarkably similar to the construction of the *Prometheus*, which aligns spectators with Prometheus through most of the play, presents Zeus's perspective only through a proxy, and shows evidence that Zeus's perspective would be presented more fully in a subsequent play and reveal flaws in Prometheus' position.

opponents', may "provoke speculation" (Goward 1999: 43), or, at least in retrospect, make the eventual shift appear credible.

II.5 The Emotions

Broadly speaking, the sympathy that spectators feel for dramatic characters is an emotional state that represents a combination of evaluation and emotional response.[52] Spectators evaluate and judge dramatic characters and their situations. These judgments lead to an emotional response.[53] This response will be translated (perhaps unconsciously) into an overall judgment of the characters, which will in turn affect how spectators judge subsequent actions and events in which these characters are involved. For example, when a fifth-century Athenian man realizes that a wife is being unfaithful to her husband, he might feel uncomfortable about the situation, experiencing distaste for her and perhaps embarrassment or pity for him. These feelings will lead to a negative appraisal of the wife so that he will be pleased at the prospect of her receiving her comeuppance, but feel disgust if she eludes detection or carries out a greater insult upon her husband.

The particular emotional content of spectators' response to dramatic characters will be a function of their response to the viewpoints, qualities, and actions that playwrights attribute to their characters and to the situations in which they are placed. Here and elsewhere, I follow Smith and others in maintaining that spectators employ the same faculties in their response to the characters and events depicted on stage as they do

[52] It is now generally agreed that cognitive processes such as evaluation and judgment and emotional responses are not mutually exclusive. See Smith 1995: 84, 188; Lada 1993: 114; Plantinga 1999: 2-6; and Konstan 2001: 6, 8-11, who emphasizes the cognitive aspect of emotion as it was viewed in the ancient world.

[53] Cf. Smith 1995: 84, who suggests by way of example that "being angry or outraged at an action involves categorizing it as undesirable or harmful to someone or something, and being affected—affectively aroused—by this categorization"

in their response to people and events in real life,[54] albeit in a way that is mitigated by the fictional nature of the drama and by generic conventions (see below).[55] This dissertation will not attempt to explain how or why seeing certain events and hearing certain views expressed aroused an emotional response in spectators. It is enough for my purposes that, on the one hand, spectators can be expected to like, admire, approve of, and pity some things while becoming angry at, looking down upon, disapproving of, feeling hatred for, and fearing others, and that, on the other hand, a playwright can deploy stimuli to evoke these emotional responses with varying degrees of success.

Although they have been set apart as the defining emotions of theatrical experience, I maintain that identification and empathy, in the sense of inviting spectators to see and imagine themselves in the position of a dramatic character, function in much the same way as other emotional effects. Like alignment, identification is one important tool, but by no means the only one, that dramatists use to influence the way spectators view dramatic characters (Smith 1995: 81).[56] When the *Seven* draws parallels between the struggle of Eteocles and his fellow Thebans against the invading Argives and Athens'

[54] Smith 1995: 53 (cf. 232): "I argue that in comprehending such representations [literary or filmic representations of the external world] we must employ, at least initially, the same schemata through which we understand reality….A mimetic theory of this sort assumes that when we engage with a fiction by watching a film or reading a book, we do so on the basis of knowledge developed in a much broader sphere than the merely fictional." Smith notes, however, that "[o]ur earlier experiences with fiction are an important part of this general 'encyclopaedia' of knowledge; the institution of fiction is a part of our social reality."

[55] See Smith 1995: 57 for a discussion of distinctions between responses to fiction and to the real world. Smith 1995: 60, following Greenspan, maintains that we can entertain a prospect and react emotionally to it, even if we do not necessarily believe that the prospect is in fact the case. Lada 1993: 100 cites "R. Schechner's notion of 'transportation', meaning that the spectator is temporarily suspended from his everyday reality and imaginatively transposed into the centre of the 'performative' world," yet spectators cannot immediately alter the way in which they respond to situations and actions that take place in the human sphere.

[56] Smith 1995: 98 observes that, on some level, human beings' ability to imagine themselves in the place of others is the only way that they can interpret the actions of anyone other than themselves. I am less interested in addressing this aspect of empathy and identification because it falls under the category of human's everyday encounters with other humans. I am interested in a much more specific case in which spectators see dramatic characters in situations with which they themselves are familiar.

own defensive war against the Persians it invites Aeschylus' fifth-century Athenian spectators to "identify" and "empathize with" the Thebans. Those who identify with the Thebans' position may, at least initially, feel increased fear on their behalf coupled with distaste for the Argives that would lead them to hope that Eteocles and the Thebans will be successful in their battle. The sense that they know what Eteocles and the Thebans are going through may also give spectators the impression that they understand the motivations of Eteocles and the Thebans and thus make spectators more comfortable supporting their cause. As more information is revealed and the fundamental differences between the position of Thebes with Eteocles at its head and Athens facing the Persians emerge, spectators will begin to identify less and less with the Thebans and perhaps question the sympathy they initially felt for them as a result of it.

PART III: AESCHYLUS AND HIS AUDIENCE

I take an audience-centered approach to Aeschylean tragedy.[57] Aeschylus' spectators would come to "recognize" the nature of his dramatic characters by measuring

[57] I hold with most scholars today that the plays were intended first and foremost to engage and entertain a predominantly Athenian audience in the first half of the fifth century and that the issues they address and the techniques they employ are best understood as a function of this central aim. See, e.g., Sommerstein 1997: 63 and Sourvinou-Inwood 1997: 161. See Hall 1997; Goldhill 2000; and Rhodes 2001: 105 for a variety of approaches to the social context of Greek tragedy. Griffin 1998 addresses this trend and discusses a broad range of scholarly views on the subject. See also the response to Griffith in Goldhill 2000 and Seaford 2000. I do not mean to deny the plays' universal appeal nor that audiences who come to the plays after their first performance can find meaning in them—this is clearly the case. I would even suggest that the qualities that continue to interest readers of the plays and inspire modern productions are not necessarily at odds with Aeschylus' original intentions. The conclusion of the *Eumenides* and perhaps the *Persians* despite its relatively few direct references to Athens, for instance, which scholars have used as evidence of Aeschylus' view of Athens and political affiliations, may have been aimed at educating other Athenians and foreign dignitaries and selling them on the idea of Athens as Aeschylus saw it. Aeschylus was almost certainly trying to engage with "big issues" such as fate, justice, and the role of women in society in his plays, though the tenor of his explorations obviously differ from those that might be undertaken by a modern playwright. See, e.g., Segal 1995, esp.15-18, for a discussion of some of the ways

what the characters say, what they do, and what happens to them against their own experiences in the real world of fifth-century Athens and in literature, particularly previous Greek tragedies. Thus, in conveying the nature of dramatic characters and inviting or undermining spectators' allegiance toward them, Aeschylus had to appeal to shared cultural and generic assumptions about right and wrong, good and bad, appealing and unappealing, delightful and dismaying, frightening and reassuring. I maintain in this dissertation that the desire to manipulate spectators' sympathies toward dramatic characters in fact accounts for the majority of references in the plays to Athenian culture and history, although these references are often pursued by scholars as ends in themselves. This approach offers a more nuanced approach to the "social function" of Greek tragedy. Rather than positing an overarching political or social role for the plays, it shows how spectators' beliefs (or at least Aeschylus' recreations of them) regarding politics and society are used to create meaning and can account for both how tragedy "produces and reproduces the ideology of the civic community" (Hall 1997: 95) and how an individual author might challenge dominant ideologies from within. In order to generate suspense and surprise and evoke emotions such as pity and fear, Aeschylus' tragedies had to anticipate, consciously or unconsciously,[58] what spectators would be expecting and how they would respond to a variety of different of cues and situations.[59]

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in which Athenian tragedy is universal. See also Taplin 1995, who discusses the life of tragedies after their first performance.

[58] Aeschylus could have written the tragedies to amuse himself, for his closest friends, or for a particular faction in Athens. He may simply have reproduced the best techniques of his predecessors without concern for his audience as such. His ability to appeal to the actual spectators who showed up on the day of the performance nevertheless depended on the degree to which his conception of them, implicit or otherwise, coincided with the reality.

[59] According to Rosenmeyer 1982: 166, "[t]he author is keenly aware of the expectations of his listeners and knows how to build them into the artifact. The action of the play rests upon the political and social experience of the listeners." Smith 1995: 171 says of *Daisy Kenyon* (directed by O. Preminger), "[l]ike any

This dissertation attempts to work back from the tragedies' built-in appeals to their prospective audiences to the techniques Aeschylus uses to delineate his characters and achieve dramatic and emotional effects. Using what we know of Athenian culture and history in the first half of the fifth century, I attempt to reconstruct how Aeschylus' audience might have reacted to a variety of moral, political, religious, social, historical, literary, and textual cues: what does a particular cue tell them about the character, does it have a positive or negative effect on their opinion, does it lead them to reserve judgment. I am particularly interested in spectators' response to drastic shifts in the nature of the evidence that point to dramatic shifts in the presentation of the characters.

Any attempt to reconstruct the response of a tragedy's original audience will by necessity be somewhat speculative,[60] but the approach is preferable to supposing that we know what Aeschylus is doing based on our personal response to the plays or that our response to the plays is a reliable guide to the response of ancient Athenians. As most scholars today recognize, there are fundamental differences between 21st century Americans and fifth-century Athenians that would influence how they perceive the tragedies.[61] This is particularly true when the subject under discussion involves emotional responses. Human emotions may or may not be hard-wired, but there is no question that the stimuli for emotional responses differ from one culture to another.[62] Modern reactions

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film, it is constructed in the knowledge of what schemata spectators are likely to bring to it. The filmmaker hypothesizes a shared background of knowledge and seeks to create certain effects against this background."

[60] Gibert 1995: 39, for instance, questions our ability to recreate the response of a fifth-century audience based on what we know of fifth-century Athens.

[61] Cf. Goldhill 1990: 100-1, in which he criticizes the "humanist" approach of Vickers 1973 that ignores cultural differences.

[62] According to Lada 1993: 95, "Experiments have tended to confirm the existence of 'universal', pan-cultural features in most aspects of emotional response; yet, it is equally well documented that the causes of individual emotions are culturally determined and variously appraised by members of different social

to the treatment of slaves, the role of women, and sexual mores in ancient Greece offer sufficient evidence of this. An investigation of the techniques that Aeschylus used to engage and entertain those who attended the tragic competition at the Greater Dionysia must not only acknowledge these differences but make them a subject of inquiry.

In addition to the limited evidence we have regarding the opinions of everyday Athenians, a project of this nature is complicated by the fact that there is no monolithic Athenian perspective. In her study of the practices of modern film viewers, Janet Staiger has observed that the combination of "intertextual knowledges…personal psychologies, and sociological dynamics" that influence individual's viewing practices insure that the experiences of real spectators rarely if ever conform to the "preferred" or normative readings that critics often derive from studying a text (2000: 2, 36-7). Staiger argues that viewers' "genre preferences" and their tendency to "project their personal, sometimes marginalized, identities into the sense data" often steer them toward unexpected, "perverse" readings of the text that do not conform to conventional recreations of ideal viewers (2000: 37).[63] It is reasonable to presume that Aeschylus' audiences also would have produced "perverse" readings of his plays. They had much in common with one another, perhaps more than the majority of modern audiences: most of them were male citizens of Athens living in the shadow of the Persian wars and experiencing the social and institutional reforms that accompanied an upswing in the power of the Athenian democracy, but even male Athenian citizens represented a wide assortment of social,

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contexts." Konstan 2001: 7, 16, has argued repeatedly that the emotions themselves differ from one culture to another: "Adult emotion, then, is a learned capacity, and accordingly exhibits considerable variation across cultures."

[63] Staiger mentions in this regard "camp" readings of classical Hollywood films that are almost entirely at odds with what one would imagine to be the films' original intentions.

economic, and political positions, not to mention personal experiences and literary tastes. Their response to the plays would have been anything but homogeneous.[64]

This dissertation does not attempt to recreate extreme and unexpected responses to the plays that might result from individual tastes and experiences, a task that may not even be possible given our lack of recorded responses to the plays from everyday Athenians.[65] I attempt to find a balance between acknowledging the diversity of Aeschylus' audience and their responses to the tragedies on the one hand and, on the other hand, examining the techniques Aeschylus used to elicit specific responses from his spectators. In gauging how Aeschylus' spectators might have responded to the plays, I attempt to take into account the major social and historical events that would have affected the lives of all of Athens' inhabitants but posit an audience that embodies a range of possible affiliations such as aristocratic/common, wealthy/poor, democratic/oligarchic, old/young, nationalistic/cosmopolitan, educated/uneducated, misogynist/philogynist, traditional/socially progressive, religiously traditional/religiously progressive, and even citizen/metic, Athenian/foreign.[66] Speculation about the actual

[64] See Stanford 1983: 48, who cites Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 2.12-17 for the variety of tragic audiences. See also Goldhill 1990b: 115, and Kip 1990: 117. There were also likely to be Greek visitors from other cities and metics in attendance who might produce even more distinct readings. On the possible makeup of the audience and its effect on interpretation, see below.

[65] Staiger uses the response of professional film reviewers and studies of viewing practices, none of which are available, nor will ever be available, for ancient viewers.

[66] Cf. Goldhill 2000 43 n.48, who distinguishes audience members in terms of "class, educational, political and social backgrounds," "change over time and circumstances," and "tacit knowledge, unexpressed assumptions and unrecognized prejudices." For studies that focus on particular aspects of a fifth-century audience, see, e.g., Griffth 1995 and 1998 on elite figures in Greek tragedy and how they address the tensions between democratic and the aristocratic concerns and Hall 1989, who offers a nationalistic (from the Athenian perspective) reading of the *Persians*. See Podlecki 1966 for an attempt to read Aeschylus' tragedies in terms of historical events. Few would maintain any longer that the tragedies respond directly to one historical event in a straightforward way, but studies such as Podlecki's are often helpful in alerting us to the political and social environment in which the tragedies were received. Cf. part I of Sidwell 1996 for an interesting discussion of the relationship between real events and their treatment in art. For a modern parallel, one might consider the discernible effect that 9/11 had on American literature, television, and film.

makeup of the audience can help us think about whom Aeschylus might have been addressing, but should not be the end of the discussion.[67] It is hard to believe that one could not find in Aeschylus' audience a male Athenian citizen who could identify on some level with the viewpoint of his mother, sister, wife, or daughter, with a soldier on the other side of the battlefield, or with a slave taken prisoner in war, even when their interests appear to run counter to their own. Thus, I use an inclusive model of the audience to chart a range of ways in which Aeschylus' spectators might have responded to the social, political, religious, historical and generic cues that Aeschylus uses over the course of the plays in depicting his dramatic characters. At the same time, I use textual cues ("authorial guidance"), elements aimed at guiding spectators toward a particular response, such as the reaction of other characters, especially the chorus, multiple cues to the same effect, gnomic utterances, dreams, omens, and dramatic characters' eventual fate, to narrow down the range of likely responses to the characters and move closer to a "dominant" or "preferred" reading of the plays that might coincide to some extent with the techniques Aeschylus used in composing them.[68]

Two related and potentially troubling methodological issues cannot entirely be dismissed. As Staiger and a myriad of other theorists have demonstrated, authors' intentions do not translate directly into audience responses. Not every effect that

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Knowing that a work is "post-9/11" does not immediately explain its relationship to those events or its perspective on those events, but it does give us a sense of the kind of issues (national safety, national tragedy, immigration, east/west relations, religious tension) with which they might be engaging.

[67] It is generally agreed that tragedians' audiences were made up of predominantly male citizen Athenians and that they were the primary addressees, though some foreign diplomats were certainly present. Cf. Winkler and Zeitlin 1990: 4. Whether the attendees belonged primarily to one class or another and whether or not other foreigners, metics, slaves and women, themselves foreign, slave, or citizen, were present are, however, points of contention. See Sommerstein 1997: 64-70 on the makeup of the audience. See Henderson 1991, who addresses the evidence for attendees at the theater and argues that women were most likely present, as do Csapo and Slater 1995: 286.

[68] In this regard, my approach is similar to, and influenced by, Easterling 1990, Sourvinou-Inwood 1989.

audience members experience can or should be attributed directly to an author's conscious intent.[69] But one can go too far with observations of this nature. It would be perverse to suggest that authors do not write texts in the hopes of achieving effects that audiences, at least on occasion, actually experience. Inevitably, there will be shortcomings in my treatment of both author and audience: whether as a result of the state of our knowledge of Athenian culture or of hermeneutic mistakes on my part, I will attribute a technique to Aeschylus that he did not employ and posit a response to a cue that no Athenian experienced. My hope is that the approach is generally sound, and that it will move us a step closer to understanding how Aeschylus composed his tragedies and the effects he hoped to achieve. A more fundamental question is whether, or to what degree, Aeschylus' audiences were paying attention to the text of the play, on which classical scholars of necessity place so much emphasis. We know that Aeschylus' tragedies found success with their audiences, but our ability to say why is significantly hampered by the fact that our evidence is limited to what is essentially the script for an elaborate and multifaceted production. Spectators may have understood very little of what was sung in Aeschylus' choral lyrics or disliked his dialogue, but they may have overlooked these limitations because of the beauty of the music, acting, or costumes, none of which we are in a position to evaluate. They may have prized his tragedies because they were edifying rather than enjoyable. Appreciating Aeschylus may have been a mark of good breeding. The list goes on. Thus, the idea that Aeschylus used his dramatic characters to generate dramatic and emotional effects must remain a working

[69] See, e.g., in classical studies Lada 1993: 95 and Gibert 1995: 35-36.

hypothesis, but I hope the evidence presented in this dissertation makes a compelling case that this is a useful and informative way to approach the plays.

The following sections present some general observations regarding how "extra-dramatic" concerns such as Athenian culture and the genre of Greek tragedy influenced the composition and reception of the tragedies.[70] I discuss how Aeschylus uses references to fifth-century Athenian politics, society, religion, and history in the depiction of dramatic characters, how he accounts for spectators' familiarity with the conventions of tragedy, and the particular techniques Aeschylus uses to influence and direct spectators' responses to his dramatic characters.

III.1 Athenian Culture in Aeschylus' Tragedies

Except where generic convention or the text dictated otherwise, Aeschylus could expect his audience to use the same faculties in judging dramatic characters that they use to judge real human beings whom they encounter in daily life. They would apply some of the same stereotypes and a similar sense of what constitutes right and wrong behavior, what is proper and improper, and, in general, how the world works that they developed everyday living in Athens in the first half of the fifth century.[71] Aeschylus would have to bear this in mind in every aspect of the tragedies, but one can see him actively engaging

[70] Beckerman 1970: 211 contrasts "extradramatic assumptions" with "textual evidence."
[71] See Smith 1995: 19, 21, 63. Cf. Elam 1980: 104: "The spectator assumes that the represented world, unless otherwise indicated, will obey the logical and physical laws of his own world….it is assumed that the semantic and cultural rules operative in W_D [the world of the drama] will be those exercised in the spectator's social context: the dramatic world 'picks up a pre-existing set of properties (and therefore individuals) from the "real" world, that is, from the world to which the (spectator) is invited to refer as the world of reference' (Eco 1978, p. 31). Dover 1974: 16, speaking specifically of characters presented to Athenian spectators in fifth-century Athens, observes that "When it is obvious (as it sometimes is) that we are expected to despise or dislike a character, sentiments uttered by that character are likely to differ from what was generally accepted at Athens."

his spectators on this level when he alludes, in spite of tragedy's conventional setting in the mythical past, to contemporary events and issues in his depiction of dramatic characters.[72] These "anachronisms" rarely represent a lack of historical knowledge or imagination on Aeschylus' part. They are instead a particularly effective way of eliciting a response to dramatic characters and situations. A playwright might have trouble evoking a strong response to ancient history about which spectators might have little knowledge or interest. Yet, by appealing to current issues and events about which spectators have definite opinions and to which they will have visceral reactions, the playwright is able not only to endow potentially one-dimensional and remote figures and situations from myth with a sense of immediacy, depth, and relevance, but also to generate powerful responses to them.

So, for instance, by drawing the aforementioned parallel between the Argives against whom Eteocles defends his city in the *Seven* and Xerxes' Persians, Aeschylus recasts the mythical situation in terms of his spectators' experiences defending their own city and, at least initially, invites them to feel distaste for the Argives on that basis. Similarly, in the *Agamemnon*, Aeschylus makes Aegisthus' true intentions clear to his audience and plays on their strongly held feelings about despotism when Aegisthus comes on stage accompanied by bodyguards. Attendants would not be unusual for a king, but the accumulation of bodyguards is a clear sign of burgeoning tyranny for fifth-century Greeks. Many of Aeschylus' appeals to contemporary experience are of the sort that one might expect in works addressed to Athenians in the first half of the fifth-

[72] See Easterling 1985 on anachronism in Greek tragedy. Easterling defends instances of anachronism on the basis that they are infrequent and rarely draw attention to themselves (pp. 2-3), but she does not explain why they occur in Greek tragedy.

century: democratic values are an issue for Pelasgus and Agamemnon in the *Suppliants* and *Agamemnon*; the specter of the Persian wars is used to obvious effect in the *Persians* but also appears in Aeschylus' depiction of the Aegyptids in the *Suppliants* and of the Argives in the *Seven*; references to legal issues and law courts resembling those of Athens surface in Argos' handling of the Danaids and unmistakably in the *Eumenides*' case between Orestes and the Furies.[73] Also represented are more universal concerns that would be no less relevant to fifth-century Athenians because they happen to share them with a number of other cultures temporally and spatially removed from their own: the role of women in society is at the center of the *Suppliants*, the *Agamemnon*, and the *Eumenides*. Issues such as fate, justice, and humanity's relationship to the gods are at the heart of all the plays.

With regard to their ability to convey information about characters, the efficacy of appeals to stereotypes and widely held beliefs range from all but decisive to extremely unreliable. The significance of certain actions is so fixed in the thinking of a culture that attributing one of them to a character is tantamount to pronouncing an immutable sentence. In the films of 21st century Hollywood, one thinks of child molestation and rape, the perpetrators of which are often immediately marked as evil, only rarely treated as real characters, and almost never redeemed. Aeschylus brings a number of "irredeemable" acts to the stage. He depicts a man who hoped to enslave Greece, the father who sacrifices his daughter (albeit at a god's behest), and the wife who commits

[73] It is almost impossible to guess the kinds of contemporary references that might have appeared in the lost and fragmentary plays. The most one can say is that the Ὅπλων κρίσις, Ἰξίων, Παλαμήδης, and the Δαναίδες, if it included a court case, would have been fertile territory for references to law courts and perhaps to modern democracy; the Λήμνιοι or, better, the Λήμνιαι and the Ὑψιπύλη would likely contain investigations of the position of women; any of the plays that treated episodes from the Trojan or Theban cycles might reference the Persian wars, etc.

adultery and murders her husband. It may, however, be an indication of Aeschylus' mythical source material and his interest in exploring the nature of his characters that, with perhaps one exception, the characters who commit these acts are not one-dimensional. Their motives and circumstances are presented to spectators for scrutiny.

In the case of other, less blatant markers, regarding which spectators' opinions were relatively unformed or conflicting, including some views on politics, beliefs regarding the gods, and social conventions, they generally would not be sufficient in themselves to sway spectators' opinion. In conjunction with other indications, a marker of this sort might help tip the scales toward a particular judgment. They may even have been enough to sway the opinion of a few viewers who held strong opinions on the subject. Yet these markers are often intentionally ambiguous and would be better suited to suggesting the possibility of a particular interpretation, foreshadowing potential problems with regard to a character, or simply raising issues that will emerge later in the play or in a subsequent play. Aeschylus often uses indications such as these to suggest an interpretation of a character that may be convincing for the moment but can easily be called into question by new developments. Thus, spectators who themselves dismissed overly anthropomorphic conceptions of the divine may have initially counted in Eteocles' favor his progressive view of the gods' role in human affairs, which allows him to maintain his composure and dismiss the Chorus's uncontrollable fear in the face of the Argive invasion. And yet, the viewpoint is not so unassailable that spectators could not reconsider its implications in light of later developments in the play. Aeschylus also uses vexed and controversial issues to draw spectators into the action and generate suspense as he does with supplication in his *Suppliants*. Most Athenians would have been familiar

with the institution. They may even have held a definite opinion on whether all suppliants must be accepted no questions asked or whether they should first be acquitted of wrongdoing,[74] but they would be hard pressed to cite an unwavering rule: they would be able to think of examples from literature and history in which suppliants were accepted without question as well as instances in which would-be suppliants were justly rejected.[75] They may have had a sense that this is a potentially crucial moment in the play, but it is one that could go either way. Clarification on the part of the playwright would be necessary in situations such as these before spectators might come to a conclusion on the matter.

III.2 Genre in the Composition and Reception of Aeschylean Tragedy[76]

Spectators attending a tragic performance for the first time might rely on the same criteria they used in everyday life to judge the characters and events depicted on the stage. Those with more experience in the theater would better equipped to understand the extent to which the world of Greek tragedy differs from the real world of fifth-century democratic Athens and the degree to which tragedy requires different expectations of its audience.[77] Just as conventions regarding the stage, the mask, the use of poetry and song, the number of actors, and the role of the chorus affect the way spectators perceive reality

[74] For modern representatives of both viewpoints, see Rösler 2007: 196-7, who argues that suppliants did not need to mention past misdeeds, and Naiden 2006: 105-169, who maintains suppliants could be rejected if judged to be insincere or guilty of a crime.
[75] See, by way of comparison, Dover 1974: 3-4 on the ambiguity of using gnomic utterances, which could often be found to support contradictory courses of action, to justify one's actions.
[76] The genre of Greek tragedy can of course be considered another, albeit more specific, aspect of Athenan culture in the fifth century. I do not mean to suggest that the genre is not influenced by cultural concerns nor that experiences in the tragic theater could not have influenced how Athenians thought about their culture.
[77] Hall 1997: 99 observes that "[i]t is essential to acknowledge the processes of artistic mediation: Athenian institutions and social relations are distorted by the genre."

during a tragic production,[78] generic conventions surrounding the subject of Greek tragedies and the kinds of events they depict would shape how spectators judge dramatic characters and, thus, how tragedians would present them (Elam 1980: 53; Gould 1978: 60). Tragedies' mythical setting would have been the greatest deterrent to spectators' thoughtlessly applying fifth-century Athenian cultural assumptions to the events on stage. The prevalence of royal families and the significant role of women on stage, for example, would have forced spectators to filter somewhat their thoughts on politics and the proper place for women.[79] A spectator would not get very far considering every mythical king an affront to their democratic ideals or every woman in the public sphere a dangerous anomaly.[80] By the same token, those who understand that kings are the norm in Greek tragedy could appreciate that Pelasgus in the *Suppliants*, an absolute monarch who nevertheless insists that his people should have a say in a decision that will directly affect them, is in fact demonstrating democratic virtues to the greatest extent possible given the context.[81] Likewise, because spectators would expect women in heroic myths to move with somewhat greater freedom than the women in contemporary Athens, they might, at least at first, have forgiven Clytemnestra for her prominent position in the public sphere, and perhaps even have admired her for the way that she acquits herself in a position of

[78] See Goffman 1974: 145-52 for an account of how stage (and radio) conventions are used to "provide functional equivalents of what could not otherwise be transmitted."
[79] Tragedy is of course not the only venue where Athenians would have perceived a disconnect between their customs and those presented in their traditional stories. With the notable exception of Theseus, very few mythical heroes were paragons of democratic virtue. And Penelope in the *Odyssey* was never perceived as bad women in Athens despite the fact that she conducted herself as a woman in a very un-Athenian way.
[80] See Pomeroy 1975: 93-97 and Foley 2001: 4 on the disparity between women's role in Athens and the much more significant role of women in Greek tragedies. See Cohen 1995: 119-42, however, on complicated evidence regarding the position of women in fifth-century Athens.
[81] See Burian 2007: 203 on the absolute nature of Pelasgus' power. See Chapters 3 and 4 for a more complicated appraisal of Pelasgus' relationship to his people and to democracy in the play.

power. Although she eventually does worse than merely undermine her husband, spectators might not immediately suppose that she is undermining Agamemnon's authority simply by virtue of interacting openly with other men in the city.[82]

One of the most important generic concerns with regard to Greek tragedy is the effect that its use of well-known myth as its source material would have both on spectators' viewing practices and on the way in which the tragedies were composed.[83] First things first: I take it as a given in this dissertation that the vast majority of Aeschylus' spectators were familiar, whether from visual representations, use in schooling, home tellings, literary treatments or previous tragedies, with the most basic elements of the myths that Aeschylus uses as his source material. They knew, for instance, that Eteocles and Polyneices would kill each other, that the Danaids would kill their husbands, that Clytemnestra would kill Agamemnon and that she would in turn be killed by Orestes. At the same time, I maintain that they were willing, and in many cases encouraged, to consider possibilities that challenged even these defining elements of the stories. The malleable nature of Greek myth and the possibility of innovation as evidenced by countless, often conflicting, accounts of the famous stories, would insure

[82] Genre conventions would rarely be entirely divorced from reality. Often a convention is simply an exaggeration or simplification of widely held views or standard experiences that is better suited to the goals of Greek tragedy. For example, spectators who have seen more than a handful of tragedies would be likely to expect every oracle or curse pronounced in a Greek tragedy to come to fruition over the course of the play or trilogy. See Roberts 1984: 24-6. Nelson (forthcoming) offers specific examples of tragic conventions as defined in opposition to the conventions of tragedy. Their response to oracles in the real world would undoubtedly be more complex: there are enough examples in Greek history to show that oracles were at best fallible and at worst open to cynical manipulation. Thus, Greek tragedy's handling of oracles and curses does not run counter to everything Athenians believed, it simply emphasizes one particular tendency.

[83] See Burian 1997 for an interesting discussion of the way in which tragedy's mythical source material influenced its composition, though his examples come primary from Euripides. See also Kip 1990: 72-97 on Dramatic Irony. The most notable exception to the convention of using well-known myths as the basis of one's tragedy in the Aeschylean corpus, the *Persians*, nevertheless treats a story that Athenians almost without exception would have known.

that, whether they knew multiple variants of a particular myth or were familiar with only one, they would rarely become complacent in their viewing of tragedies. And playwrights would have gone to great lengths to insure that this would not happen. They could manipulate expectations by playing one well-known variant of a myth against another, by delaying an inevitable conclusion or by introducing a new and surprising development that spectators could not have predicted. In the case of Aeschylus, I have already suggested that his manipulation of the traditional stories focuses not so much on what well-known characters do, but how and why they do it, and that he often derives suspense from the suggestion that any number of explanations for their actions are possible.

The reality of our limited knowledge of Greek tragedy—we have only a tiny fraction of the Greek tragedies composed for the stage—limits the degree to which we can see how, except in a handful of cases, Aeschylus actually invokes the conventions of Greek tragedy. Particularly problematic in the case of Aeschylus is the fact that we have almost no evidence for tragedy prior to his *Persians*, our first extant tragedy, including his own plays.[84] We can be sure that Aeschylus and his audience would have approached a tragic performance with expectations derived from their years of experience in the tragic theater. We simply cannot say with certainty what this experience would have

[84] Tragedy was in existence long before Aeschylus' first production. The standard date for Thespis' first production is 535, but see West 1989 and Scullion 2002: 81-2 for the questionable nature of our sources for early dates in the history of Greek tragedy. Aeschylus himself may have been putting on plays for 12 or perhaps even 27 years before the performance of the *Persians*. The *Marmor Parium* reports Aeschylus' first victory in 484. The *Suda*, however, records a competition between Pratinas, Choerilus, and Aeschylus in the 70th Olympiad (499/6). Again, however, see Scullion 2002: 81-2, for the tenuous nature of this evidence.

entailed.[85] We must be willing to accept that we may not be able to explain every aspect of the plays. There are elements of Aeschylus' appeal to his audience in the realm of genre as well as culture and history that will escape us. On the other hand, even from the limited sample that has reached us, we can see that tragedy was (like all genres) a fluid form that varied over time and from author to author. Thus, we must not be overzealous in assuming that conventions from later tragedies were in place when Aeschylus was working. We can extrapolate some general patterns regarding the genre of Greek tragedy by looking at the body of surviving tragedy, but we should not overvalue the evidentiary value with regard to genre conventions of the plays of Sophocles and Euripides. This is particularly the case in those instances when Sophocles and Euripides took up stories already treated by Aeschylus. Euripides' depictions of Clytemnestra or Eteocles may have been influenced by Aeschylus' and may even tell us something about how Euripides responded to Aeschylus' plays, but they should not be used as evidence for how spectators would have responded to Aeschylus' dramatic characters.

III.3 Authorial Guidance

Cultural assumptions and generic conventions are the raw material for depicting and inviting the desired responses to dramatic characters, but Aeschylus uses a variety of techniques to guide, clarify, and reinforce these responses. Tragedian could not simply attribute an action to a dramatic character that they thought most spectators would interpret in a particular way and hope that it would have the desired effect upon his

[85] We may be somewhat heartened in this regard by the suggestion in the *Life of Aeschylus* that Aeschylus' tragedies may have marked a departure from those of his predecessors (2). This would certainly have been the case if he did in fact introduce the second actor. Yet we also know from the hypothesis of the *Persians* of at least one occasion in which Aeschylus was directly influenced by the work of a predecessor.

audience as a whole. Aeschylus needed to assist his spectators in reaching the conclusion he was hoping for. The techniques he used to do so are often the clearest indication of his hand in the text. One frequently used device in Aeschylus and in the other tragedians is evaluation by a dramatic character's "internal audience," i.e., other characters in the tragedy, both to make clear what exactly is going on and to give spectators a sense of how they should respond to them.[86] Other characters can clarify whether an action is to be viewed in a positive or in negative light, draw attention to important qualities and actions, or comment directly on what kind of person a character is. We can see this technique at work in the Chorus's response to Eteocles' decision to face his brother in battle, in which they underline the enormity of the act for spectators who might otherwise have considered fratricide a small price to pay to defend a city against barbaric invaders. In the *Choephori*, spectators may have felt that they had a clear sense of Clytemnestra's nature even before she takes the stage not only from her actions in the *Agamemnon* but also from the detailed description of her crimes by Electra, Orestes, and the Chorus of her slaves. Aeschylus can invite spectators' pity for a dramatic character or situation by having other characters comment on his or her pitiable position or weep from them.[87] This happens throughout Aeschylus' tragedies.[88] When characters are terrified about what will happen to a character, spectators know that the character is in a dangerous position. And so on. The nature of the speaker as perceived by spectators will of course

[86] See Pfister 1988: 163. Pfister distinguishes between characterization techniques that are "transmitted by one of the figures" (figural) and those that center on the way in which the playwright presents his characters (authorial), on which see below, and observes that these techniques can be both explicit and implicit.
[87] On this mirroring effect in spectatorship, cf. Hor. Ars 99: ut ridentibus adrident, ita flentibus adflent humani voltus. si vis me flere, dolendum est. Lada 1993: 108 notes the prevalence in Greek tragedies of sympathetic responses by internal audiences and in particular choruses, all of which "may be considered as occupying a position similar to that of a theatrical spectator." See also Stanford 1983: 47.
[88] It is also particularly evident in the *Prometheus Bound*.

influence how spectators interpret these evaluations. They are likely to weigh heavily the evaluations of characters whom they consider to be sympathetic and dismiss the evaluations of unsympathetic characters.[89] But often, Aeschylus can give the information an air of objectivity by placing in the mouth of characters whose pronouncements are not subject to the same kind of scrutiny, such as minor characters (in particular messengers) and, when its members are not themselves active and important characters in the tragedy, the chorus.[90]

Aeschylus also uses gnomic utterances, dreams, omens, curses, divine punishments, and instances of poetic justice to convey whether a dramatic character has acted correctly and made the right decisions. To the degree that playwrights define the world in which their characters exist, they can show that a character's actions and decisions conform or fail to conform to the way that things should be.[91] The allusion to the curse near the conclusion of the *Seven* (in conjunction with the downfall of Laius and Oedipus in the first two plays of the trilogy) suggests to spectators that the fate of Eteocles and Polyneices is inevitable, and, for this reason, perhaps less troubling (though perhaps not). And although they do not say so explicitly, the Chorus's statements about *hybris* giving birth to *hybris* like itself and ruin coming to the houses of the wealthy (763-

[89] Pfister 1988: 183-95 notes that the information presented is open to distortion due to "particular figure-perspective" and characters' "various strategic aims and tactical considerations." See also Goffman 1974: 152.

[90] Choruses in Aeschylus are almost never as removed from the action and objective as choruses in the other tragedians are generally thought to be, though Rosenmeyer 1982: 149 notes that "[s]ince the chorus can dispense with the restrictions of time and place in its meditations and paeans, its guidance of our sympathies and antipathies is more compelling." For a discussion of the role of choruses that focuses on Euripidean choruses, but addresses some of the ways in which spectators respond to their evaluations, see Mastronarde 1999. I do not believe that this effect is limited to the Chorus.

[91] Cf. Rosenmeyer 1982: 149, although his description of the Chorus's role may fall between figural and authorial commentary: "[i] Aeschylus, the choral statement usually precedes it, and often at a considerable distance. It is a preparer, a shaper of expectations, and a mood setter, permitting us to read the terms of the dialogue against a magnifying screen."

72) and Cassandra's allusions to the curse of the house of Atreus (1186-93, 1215-25) in the *Agamemnon* may have led spectators to believe that Agamemnon's death was foreordained by the gods and that Clytemnestra was merely a means to this end. Orestes' insanity at the conclusion of the *Choephori* clearly suggests that his act of matricide is not as unproblematic in the eyes of the gods as it initially appeared. These moments in which the world of the tragedy and the belief system it offers seem to pass judgment upon dramatic characters are often the most powerful and effective ways to influence spectators' view of dramatic characters.[92]

Although tragedians could use these techniques to guide and reinforce spectators' responses to their dramatic characters, there would obviously be limits to the kinds of responses they could coax from their audiences. Aeschylus could not simply contradict everything that spectators believed, ignore all of their expectations regarding the way the world works, and hope to change their worldview. He had to begin with premises that his spectators could more or less agree upon; he could not simply depict a tyrant unjustly killing innocent victims, have all of the play's other characters remark upon what a wonderful man he is, and expect spectators to agree with them. And yet, while tragedians could, and surely often did, compose plays that conformed in their entirety to spectators' beliefs about the world, they could also, as Segal observes, challenge spectators' accepted notions "by questioning or probing familiar values, or by examining various roles for men and women in the city, or by setting up situations of hypothetical conflicts between

[92] This is not always the case. One thinks of the *O.T.*, for example, in which Oedipus' divine punishment does not alienate, but rather invite, spectators' sympathy for him.

overlapping roles" (Segal: 1998).[93] Playwrights had to begin with assumptions and beliefs that coincided with those of the majority of their spectators or risk alienating them.[94] They could then proceed, however, to offer counter-examples to these beliefs or reveal their inherent contradictions, thereby pointing spectators in a different direction. The *Persians*, for instance, begins with a depiction of that Persian army that largely conforms to Greek stereotypes, but over time reveals the degree to which the members of the Persian Empire who composed its forces were, like the Athenians, victims of Xerxes' tyranny.

PART IV: THE *ORESTEIA*: A TEST CASE

In this section, I attempt to show in practice how Aeschylus' spectators' reaction to the primary dramatic characters of the *Oresteia* might have changed based on each new indication over the course of the plays and how these reactions would have influenced their perception of the events depicted on stage. For the sake of simplicity, I pass over some potential problems as well as differences in the makeup of Aeschylus' audience that might complicate the picture and attempt to construct a reading that might correspond to that of a majority of spectators. Subsequent chapters include more detailed analyses of individual passages, pay more attention to potentially "dissenting" responses to evidence regarding dramatic characters, and, in general, allow for a greater degree of

[93] Cf. Smith 1995: 52: "[i]n phenomenological and affective terms, the testing of belief-schemata against new experience may result in continued conformity to an ideology, questioning the authorities who espouse the ideology, conceptual conflict, or the more or less drastic revision of beliefs....[N]o matter how far our beliefs and values are initially shaped by the social structures in which we are immersed, we are capable of expanding and adapting our existing conceptual frameworks through new experience, including our experience of fictional representations."

[94] In later drama, this was sometimes the goal of a production.

problematization with regard to audience response. Yet both here and in later chapters I will employ a shorthand of sorts: I will often have reason to suggest that the depiction of a character is deliberately left ambiguous in order to generate suspense. By this I mean that while individual spectators might have come down one way or the other on an issue, generally speaking, they could adduce convincing arguments on both sides. Thus, when the issue is eventually resolved one way or the other, spectators may be surprised, but they will not be caught totally unaware insofar as they will be able to recall supporting evidence which they may have initially discounted.

As suggested above, in attempting to recreate spectators' experience in the theater, it will often be necessary to employ extended arguments and suppositions about how evidence regarding dramatic characters will affect spectators, how it will affect their opinion of the characters, their motives, and the situations in which they find themselves, and what it will lead spectators to expect as the play continues. In contrast to the length at which they are treated, however, spectators' attempts to discern what is happening and predict what will happen next might have taken place in a split second.[95] Their consideration of latent possibilities in the plot may never have fully surfaced in their thinking. These readings might correspond more closely to their discussions after the performance.

[95] Cf. Smith 1995: 49-50: "both general cultural and specifically ideological beliefs and values—those that arise and function in relation to a society's power structures—can be conceptualized in the cognitive model as automatized, and therefore apparently natural, habits of mind" (49).

IV.1 AGAMEMNON

Despite its elusiveness, the Watchman's introductory speech conveys to spectators that Aeschylus' play will dramatize Agamemnon's troubled homecoming, in which he will be murdered at the hands of his wife, Clytemnestra, or her lover. Both the traditional form of the story and Watchman's affection for Agamemnon suggests that Clytemnestra will be the play's villain, or at best an unwitting accomplice, and that Agamemnon will be a sympathetic victim.[96] What follows in the play is a much more complex depiction of the royal couple, perhaps the most complex character depictions in the extant plays of Aeschylus.

Initially, Clytemnestra is presented in a positive and even sympathetic fashion (cf. Vickers 1973: 378). Modern critics have suggested that her manliness, public presence, authority, plotting, manipulation of language, and adultery make her an anomalous women, a monster, with whom no Athenian man could sympathize.[97] It is perhaps best, however, to take our cue from her internal audience: although the Chorus expresses their admiration for Clytemnestra, they subsequently take a view of Clytemnestra that would please the least progressive of Aeschylus' spectators, questioning her report that Agamemnon has returned and criticizing her womanly gullibility (477-87). Not only do their views of Clytemnestra and women prove false, they later admit as much (583).[98] And, whereas the Watchman's reference to Clytemnestra's manliness (11) may have put off some spectators, when the men of the chorus tells her that she speaks "like a wise

[96] In Homer, Aegisthus is the murderer, Clytemnestra at best an accomplice (cf. *Od.* 1.35-39, 3.272-7, 24.96-7, 199-200), though one reference suggests that she killed Cassandra (*Od*. 11.422-3). Cf.. But cf. the depiction of her in Pindar *P*. 11.19-32.
[97] See, e.g., Goldhill 1992: 37-40, McClure 1997: 114, and Winnington-Ingram 1983: 84.
[98] The contrast between the Clytemnestra's confidence and the Chorus's wavering position may have reinforced the impression that Clytemnestra is fit to lead them.

man" (κατ' ἄνδρα σώφρον[α], 351) it is clearly meant as a compliment, and spectators might have been inclined to agree with them.[99] Clytemnestra is a women functioning in a man's world but nevertheless appears to be a capable, almost admirable, leader in Agamemnon's stead.[100] In light of the traditional story, spectators may have interpreted her speech at lines 598-612 about her joy at Agamemnon's arrival and her loyalty as the height of irony (cf. 615-6). And yet the speech conforms sufficiently to the depiction of her thus far in the play to suggest the possibility, however slim, that she has in fact remained faithful; the absence of Aegisthus or any mention of adultery (though cf. 612) through most of the play leaves the possibility open.[101] Goldhill argues that the small part given to Aegisthus emphasizes Clytemnestra's power and thus makes her more frightening (1992: 40). I would suggest that by delaying his entrance and downplaying his role and her relationship to him, the play makes her more sympathetic to an audience of Athenian men.

The depiction of the returning hero is, by contrast, almost entirely negative.[102] The Chorus points to his failures as a husband, father, and political leader. They put forth a religious view that entails his destruction, and they imply that Agamemnon may deserve to be dethroned. They describe a war that is sanctioned by Zeus but fought "over a woman of many men" (πολυάνδρος ἀμφὶ φυναικὸς, 62), and juxtapose this war with

[99] The less than enlightened view of Fraenkel 1950: 178 in reference to Clytemnestra's manliness is instructive: Clytemnestra is probably calling attention to her superior, man-like insight into the nature of human affairs, including her knowledge of the reverence due to the gods, and also her experience of what life is like in the midst of the turmoil of war. This latter is particularly remarkable in a woman.

[100] McClure 1997: 113 discusses how Clytemnestra learns to speak the language of the masculine majority in order to function in their midst.

[101]

[102] Van Erp Taalman Kip 1996: 128 notes the negative depiction of Agamemnon and the relatively positive one of Clytemnestra: "in the first play Agamemnon is guilty and Clytemnestra has at least one valid—though not sufficient—reason to kill him."

the sacrifice of Iphigeneia carried out to ensure its completion. They describe Agamemnon's decision to kill his daughter as impious, unclean, and unholy (δυσσεβῆ…ἄναγνον ἀνίερον), the act itself as one of the utmost daring (τὸ παντόλμον) and motivated by insanity (παρακοπὰ), and its victim as a paragon of virtue (218-23; 240-47). The Chorus's account of the people's response to the Atreidae would have appealed to spectators' democratic sensibilities.[103] The Argives lament the death of their loved ones "on behalf of another man's wife" (448). They come to resent Agamemnon and Menelaus (449-51), and there may be talk of an uprising (456-7).[104] Even the Chorus admits that they did not approve of the way Agamemnon conducted the Greek army at Troy (799-804). The Chorus also suggests that impious deeds beget more impiety (758-60),[105] that old *hybris* brings about new *hybris*, and recklessness (θράσος) (763-71), that Justice abandons rich houses whose inhabitants are impure and does not revere the power of wealth (773-81), none of which bodes well for Agamemnon and the house of Atreus, in which acts of *hybris* and recklessness are the rule.

Upon Agamemnon's arrival, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra make their case for the sympathy of both their internal and external audiences.[106] Agamemnon does not do himself any favors. He reminds spectators that a war was fought and a city destroyed for the sake of a woman (821-26). He appears to revel in exactly the kind of savage and sacrilegious acts against which Clytemnestra warned (338-42) and to which the

[103] Conversely, it may have invited sympathy from spectators with oligarchic leanings.
[104] Cf. the reference to a curse that gets its power from the people, a "democratic curse" (δημοκράντου ἀρᾶς).
[105] This ode appears to follow from the Chorus's discussion of Helen and Paris's crime and the punishment inflicted because of it. See Sommerstein 1996: 171-2 on the application of the ode to Agamemnon.
[106] According to Denniston and Page 1957: 144, Clytemnestra "tries to win [the chorus's] sympathy, or at least to disarm their hostility, by professing her innocence and dwelling on the hardships which she has undergone."

Messenger attested (527-8), and he goes so far as to compare the Argives to a raw-flesh-eating lion lapping its fill of tyrant's blood (827-8). Given his present situation, his suggestion that he is a keen judge of character (832-40) invites spectators familiar with other versions of the myth to question his judgment. His plan to appoint assemblies to run the city and religious affairs and to address problems may be too little too late. Clytemnestra's account of her suffering at home with a husband at war may once again be understood as a break from traditional versions of the story or as a kind of justification for her adultery to those who believed that she was going to kill Agamemnon.[107] Another reference to public unrest appears almost incidentally in her explanation of Orestes' absence (880-885), but may have reinforced the idea of the people's distaste for Agamemnon's rule.

The "tapestry scene" has generally been read in terms of Agamemnon's psychology, Clytemnestra's violent persuasion, and the divine consequences of treading on the fabric.[108] These factors may have occurred to spectators, but here, as elsewhere, the meaning behind the action may matter less than the impact it would have had on spectators' view of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Agamemnon acknowledges that the act is womanly (918), barbaric (919), reserved for the gods, (922-3, 925), and something that mortal men should fear (924). The act will bring the blame of the Argive people, whose voice is strong (937-9). In this way, the text tells spectators exactly what it says

[107] The crux of the speech may be her assertion that she is "not ashamed to tell you all of my man-loving ways" (φιλάνορας τρόπους) (856)." Fraenkel 1950: 390 emphatically denies that it can have any such meaning and translates it as "husband-loving," though he cites those critics who (mistakenly, in his opinion) support the former reading. Cf. McClure 1997: 118.

[108] See Taplin 1975: 79 for a discussion and rejection of the psychological interpretations. See Lebeck 1971: 40-41 and Taplin 1975: 82 for Clytemnestra's violent persuasion. For a discussion of Agamemnon's act as viewed in the divine sphere, see Lloyd-Jones (1983), 68ff. and cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 87. See also Jones 1988: 8-10 for an account of the scene that focuses on the *oikos* of Atreus.

about Agamemnon when he does finally choose, for whatever reason, to walk on the tapestries.[109] Clytemnestra does not, however, come away unblemished. She is either intentionally leading her husband into temptation or showing an absolute disdain for her people. Her dominance of her husband, couched in military language (cf. Lebeck 1971: 40 and Taplin 1975: 82) may also have made many of the men in the audience uncomfortable. The tension that this scene creates between spectators' feelings for Agamemnon and Clytemnestra may have heighted the suspense brought about by the subsequent ode, in which the Chorus's dwells on its nameless fears and the finality of death.

The appearance of Cassandra may have shifted spectators' sympathy away from both Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, though for two very different reasons.[110] It is difficult to gauge the effect of Clytemnestra's treatment of Cassandra as a slave, which seems to us too dismissive and haughty, but may have had little effect on spectators used to the realities of the institution of slavery.[111] Cassandra's account of Clytemnestra is less ambiguous. She expresses disgust at Clytemnestra's unspeakable act of betrayal against her own husband (cf. 1101-3, 1108, 1116, 1228-30), alludes to Aegisthus (1223-26), wonders at Clytemnestra's boldness (1231, 1237), compares her to a series of

[109] Cf. Denniston and Page 1957: 151: "Clytemnestra's conduct is consistent throughout: she wishes to alienate sympathy from him [Agamemnon], to expose him as arrogant and sacrilegious, an orientalized despot, a victim deserving of his fate." I agree that this is the effect of the scene but would emphasize that it is not Clytemnestra but Aeschylus who uses both Clytemnestra and Agamemnon to achieve it.
[110] Vickers 1973: 382 observes that "[i]n *Agamemnon* characters and their claims on our respect or sympathy are presented stage by stage, a movement at a time. I have commented on how Agamemnon's murder of Iphigenia and the retribution which must follow that, as all the crimes of Atreus, are the focal points for the first thousand lines of the play, but that suddenly with Cassandra's scene the emphasis changes, anger is shifted away from the father killing the daughter to the wife killing the head of the household." See also van Erp Taalman Kip 1996: 126. Zeitlin 1965: 491, sees the following progression in depiction of Clytemnestra: "she is first the bereaved parent, then the avenger, and finally, at the end of the *Agamemnon*, shows herself jealous wife and adulterous."
[111] Cassandra's (formerly) noble status may have made Clytemnestra's treatment of her seem more pitiable and less appropriate to spectators.

monsters (1231-36) and reveals that she has been lying (1236-38). Furthermore, her suffering at Apollo's hands, enslavement, and present fate make her, unlike Agamemnon, an entirely innocent and sympathetic victim, thus simplifying spectators' evaluation when Clytemnestra murders her.[112] Yet, at the same time, Cassandra's allusion to the pitiable destruction of her city (1167-71), her retelling, along with the Chorus, of the history of the house of Atreus (1182-93, 1217-22, 1242-3), and the Chorus's observation that Agamemnon may be fated to suffer for the crimes of those who came before him (1338-42) suggest the possibility that Agamemnon's fall is destined for reasons that go beyond his wife's plotting.

Few among Aeschylus' spectators could have sympathized with a woman murdering her own husband, regardless of his shortcomings,[113] a response that is borne out by the Chorus's inability to reconcile themselves to the murders (cf. 1426-30), and perhaps heightened by the delight Clytemnestra appears to take in her act (1381-92, 1446-7). Nevertheless, she justifies her action, blaming Agamemnon for the murder of Iphigeneia (1415-18, cf. 1525-30) and reminding the chorus of Agamemnon's and the other Greeks' part in the war fought over Helen (1462-67). She also mentions Agamemnon's relationship with Cassandra (1438-46). The character may be thought to be justifying her act, but spectators may have considered a woman's jealousy insufficient reason for murder. The fact that her accusations are immediately prefaced by references to Aegisthus (1435-7) would not help in this regard. Yet Clytemnestra gains ground with

[112] Thalmann 1985: 229 and McClure 1997: 121 have noted that Cassandra is in many ways the inverse of Clytemnestra and reestablishes norms for proper female behavior.
[113] See Foley 2001: 224. Cf. O'Daly 1985: 8 n30, "Audience attitudes to Clytemnestra will inevitably have been affected by the contemporary juridicial status of women, even if allowance will have been made for the queen's "historical" role in the myth. But the latter will never justify Clytemnestra's destructive blow at the head of the household whose prosperity and continuity she should serve"

the Chorus, and perhaps with spectators, when she takes up their suggestion that Agamemnon was a victim of "strife upon his house" (1460-1), and asserts that she is not the wife of Agamemnon but the *Alastor*, the "avenging spirit," of Atreus' feast (1498-1504) (cf. Neuberg 1991: 60-2 and Foley 2001: 220).

The appearance of Aegisthus at the play's conclusion is damning for Clytemnestra on the surface, but may reveal a glimmer of light.[114] His attribution of Agamemnon's death to the crimes of Atreus and the curse of Pelops echoes Clytemnestra's argument and is consistent with evidence presented earlier in the play. Aegisthus' words are undermined, however, by the fact that he is presented as a caricature of a tyrant with his bodyguards (1650), his ill-treatment of those who disagree with him (1639-41, 1649-50), and his promise to rule the city through bribes to the people (1638-9). And yet, he may also have served as a foil to Clytemnestra. She has already promised to end the killing and be content with what has been done (1568-76).[115] With the introduction Aegisthus, she is given the chance (perhaps forced) to affirm her intention to shed no more blood (1654-60) and to mitigate Aegisthus' violent tendencies. The overall effect is ambiguous. Within the confines of the traditional story which requires that she has a part in the murder of her husband, the *Agamemnon* presents Clytemnestra as the avenger of past crimes, as the harbinger of a new regime to replace the old, faulty one, on the one hand, and as a jealous woman who commits adultery and murders her own husband on the other. Going into the *Choephori*, it may be unclear to

[114] Van Erp Taalmann Kip 1996: 126, suggests that Clyemnestra is "discredited in the final scene." O'Daly 1985: 16 suggests that she is presented in "an ambivalent light, as a tragic, and not merely [as] a monstrous figure."

[115] Clytemnestra has threatened violence against the Chorus (1421-25), but spectators may have been reassured as to her sincerity by her suggestion that Iphigeneia will embrace Agamemnon in the underworld, implying the possibility of reconciliation (1555-60). Other spectators may have interpreted these lines as the height of irony.

spectators in which direction Aeschylus will take the story. The effect is similar to that of the *Suppliants*, in which spectators are left fundamentally uncertain as to the true nature of the Danaids or how to judge their actions when the subsequent play begins.

IV.2 CHOEPHORI

Of all of Aeschylus' extant plays, the *Choephori* is perhaps the most focused on action: Orestes and Electra's recognition scene, the hatching of the plan to murder Clytemnestra, the preparation for it, and the murder itself. As is often the case in plays that focus on a complex action, the dramatic characters and their relationship with one another are clearly drawn through most of the play. It is only at the end that fundamental questions arise regarding Orestes and the act of matricide.

From the outset and for most of its duration, the *Choephori* "aligns" spectators with Orestes, Electra, and the Chorus of slave women. They are spectators' only source of information for close to two thirds of the play,[116] and their account of the situation does everything possible to invite antipathy for Clytemnestra, primarily by inviting outrage at her crimes and pity for her victims (Vickers 1973: 382).[117] The location of the scene at Agamemnon's grave and the context of a prayer for his aid ensure that his

[116] Rehm 1992: 93 suggests that spectators are placed in the position of "accessories before the fact." Clytemnestra, the first voice that is not sympathetic to their cause, does not take the stage until line 668.

[117] In what follows, I do not distinguish between evidence taken from the kommos and from what precedes it. The context of the kommos, with its address to dead Agamemnon, is a particularly effective way to air Orestes, Electra, and the Chorus's complaints against Clytemenstra while dwelling on the crime that will motivate Orestes' action. My argument is not affected by the debate as to whether the scene is a static representation of Orestes' already-made decision to kill his mother or if it dramatizes the process through which he reaches the decision, but for discussions of the kommos that address this debate, see, e.g., Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1914: 205-10, Schadewaldt 1932, Lesky 1943, Reinhardt 1949: 112-122, Dawe 1963: 57, Lebeck 1971: 112-14, Conacher 1974: 332-39, Garvie 1986: 122-25, and Sier 1988. I would suggest that scene is better understood not in terms of its effect upon Orestes' psyche, but rather in terms of how it makes an argument addressed to spectators for the necessity of Clytemnestra's death that is bolstered by the pity spectators are invited to feel for Orestes and Electra.

murder is never far from the mind of spectators. Electra and the Chorus describe in detail how they lamented when Agamemnon died (22-31, 423-28, 447-50), and Orestes in particular bewails Agamemnon's humiliating death and subsequent dishonor at Clytemnestra's hands (cf. 345-53, 430-33, 439-443, 479, 491-95). They also describe the way she has treated them. According to Electra, Clytemnestra has no right to be called mother (190-91). She rejects her children in favor of the man who helped kill their father (132-3, cf. 418-19): she exiled Orestes (cf. 135-6) and treats Electra like a slave (135; cf. 445-49) while luxuriating with Aegisthus in their patrimony (136-37).

The *Choephori* largely overshadows the biased nature of Electra and Orestes' account by presenting them as sympathetic victims. Electra and Orestes allude numerous times to the fact that they have effectively been orphaned and are in need of help from the gods and their father (e.g., 247-54, 336-39, 407-9; cf. 238-4). Electra literally cries out for sympathy (130, 199; cf. 450). The desperation of their positions is reinforced by their joy at finding one another. Spectators may have been caught up in this emotional reunion and felt concern for them as a result. The generic convention of recognition scenes may at least have guaranteed that spectators consider Electra and Orestes the play's "main characters" with whom they should sympathize.[118] While spectators might normally be suspicious of children who dishonor their parents, Orestes and Electra's disdain for their mother is offset by their unwavering commitment to their father. The Chorus also largely corroborates their depiction of Clytemnestra, expressing its hatred for her and Aegisthus (101, 111), accusing the pair of murder, and calling Clytemnestra a "godless woman" (δύσθεος γυνά: 46, cf. 191). Their objectivity is confirmed by the fact that they hate

[118] Spectators may have similarly expected the deceiver and the deceived in a deception plot such as the one that occurs later in the play to be the play's protagonist and antagonist. See below.

Clytemnestra and sympathize with Agamemnon in spite of their acknowledgement that, as slaves, they are beholden to their present masters (i.e., Clytemnestra and Aegisthus) (75-84, cf. 265-68).

Retribution for Clytemnestra's crime is presented as necessary and even just. Already in the *Agamemnon*, the punishment of Clytemnestra at the hands of Orestes is presented as a foregone conclusion (1279-85), and this view is quickly affirmed in the *Choephori*.[119] Immediately after Orestes prays to avenge his father's death, the Chorus reveals that the dead are angry with Clytemnestra (37-41), that there is no atoning for murder (49-50, 66-67, 71-74, cf. 514-21), and that justice will come to the guilty (61-65, 69-70). Orestes is presented as a savior of their house (236, 265). The children's prayers to the gods for aid and justice (147-48, 201-2, 398-99, 462) at least implies that they are in the right.[120] They will deceive Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, but assert that they will merely be repaying them in kind (556-8).

At lines 297-305, Orestes offers the most convincing evidence that he and his comrades are acting justly (Belfiore 1992: 109): the god Apollo has not only commanded him to avenge his father but has also threatened him with death, plagues and even Erinyes should he fail.[121] Orestes' other motives effectively offer spectators a list of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra's crimes: grief for his father, the loss of his patrimony, and the misrule of the Argives (300-305). But at this stage, there can be no doubting the words of

[119] Lesky 1983: 79 points out that the idea of matricide is never made explicit, perhaps for the sake of the spectators' view of Orestes. See also Garvie 1978: 77.
[120] Cf., however, line 461.
[121] Note, however, the view of Winnington-Ingram 1983: 135 that "Apollo is used by Aeschylus not to simplify, but to complicate the issue."

Apollo, "the prophet who has never been false before" (μάντις ἀψευδὴς τὸ πρίν: 558-59) (cf. Belfiore 1992: 109).

There are of course problems with the case Orestes and Electra present. First and foremost, although the text does not explicitly make the connection, spectators might be struck by the irony of the Chorus' arguing that there is no atoning for murder in reference to Clytemnestra's crime in order to motivate Orestes and justify the murder of Clytemnestra. At times, Electra and Orestes may also have seemed too eager for their mothers death, as when Electra compares her "implacable heart" to a "savage-minded wolf" (421-2), a trait which, depending on how one reads the passage, she may be claiming to have inherited from her mother (ἐκ ματρός) (Lebeck 1971: 122).[122] Lastly, although the Chorus may be seen as a representative of Argos (Garvie 1986: 316-7), some spectators may have been uncomfortable with the prominent role that foreign slave women play in bringing about the decision to kill Clytemnestra (cf. 455, 471-78).[123] Yet despite the one-sided nature of Orestes, Electra, and the Chorus's account of Clytemnestra and some problematic indications, the sheer weight of the evidence against her, along with the command of a god to punish her, would have likely led spectators to suppress these concerns.

When Clytemnestra finally takes the stage, she does not resemble the woman described thus far in the play, and spectators may have been jarred by the lack of coincidence between the account of her and the reality.[124] This Clytemnestra appears to defer to the authority of men (672-3, 716-8; cf. 734-37), to show what seems to be

[122] Garvie 2001: 157 suggests that this reading is possible. Conacher 1974: 338 excludes it on the basis of word order.
[123] They do, however, seem to show a moments fear at what has been decided (463-5).
[124] Sommerstein 1996: 266 says that Clytemnestra "behaves as an utterly normal woman."

sincere emotion at the news of Orestes' death (691-99),[125] and to treat "the Messenger" (who is, in reality, Orestes) with kindness (707-14). Spectators might, however, ignore or be skeptical of these indications for a number of reasons. Given what they have seen of Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* and what they have heard of her in the *Choephori*, spectators may suspect her of dissembling. Electra has already warned of her false affections (420). And the Chorus has encouraged the audience to view her in the most reductive way possible in the ode that immediately precedes her entrance: they offer an inventory of evil women and female monsters and sing the praises of Dike, presenting Clytemnestra not as a mother, but as a monster to be eradicated. The detailed presentation of Clytemnestra's dream, Orestes' interpretation of its significance, and the plot to gain entrance to the palace in order to kill her may have led spectators familiar with the conventions of deception plots to view Clytemnestra as an obstacle to Orestes' success rather than a viable competitor for their sympathies. In any case, whatever positive effect Clytemnestra's behavior may have had upon spectators is immediately undercut by Cilissa, Orestes' nurse. She reveals that Clytemnestra feigned her response to the news of Orestes' death and in fact rejoiced secretly when she heard it (737-40). Cilissa also undermines Clytemnestra's role as mother, and perhaps mitigates the effect of the coming matricide, when she observes that she, not Clytemnestra, acted as mother

[125] According to Dawe 1963: 53 asserts, contrary to the nurse's later suggestion and to the view other critics at the time, these lines "contain nothing, not even the most insignificant particle, to suggest that their speaker is not voicing a genuine emotion, and, as Lesky says, 'Klytaimestra redet anders, wenn sie heuchelt, das zeigt der Agamemnon'."

to him, "taking Orestes from his father" (762), caring for him, feeding him, and even changing him (Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 116).[126]

The play presents the murder of Aegisthus as an unproblematic act and passes over it quickly. The behavior of the Chorus while it is being carried out, on the other hand, may have raised questions about the justice of Orestes' act in the moments leading up to his confrontation with Clytemnestra. Prior to Aegisthus' murder, the Chorus affirmed the justice of Orestes' plan (787-88), prayed that he will maintain his resolve (796-99, 827-30) and that those inside the house pay for their bloodshed (800-5, 834-37), asserted that the act of matricide is ἀνεπίμομφον, "without blame,"[127] and suggested that Orestes is acting as a representative of freedom (863). Yet when Orestes attacks Aegisthus, and before they know the outcome of the encounter, they distance themselves from Orestes so as to appear "innocent of evils" (ἀναίτιαι κακῶν, 872-4). In its willingness to abandon Orestes and its characterization of his actions as "evils," the Chorus's behavior raises questions about their commitment to the plot. After treating the Chorus as trustworthy advisors and allies through much of the play,[128] Aeschylus reminds his spectators with these lines that the Chorus are slaves. He may be using stereotypes about unreliable slaves to raise doubts about the Chorus and, given the integral role they played in its inception, the plot itself.[129]

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[126] This revelation may have less impact on upper-class Athenians if wet nurses were common among them.

[127] Cf. the manuscript reading, however, which characterizes the matricide as an ἐπίμομφαν ἄταν, a "blameworthy ruin," and would have the Chorus acknowledging the problematic nature of Orestes' act.

[128] Lesky 1983: 78 says of the Chorus early in the play that they are only briefing identified as slaves and otherwise "treated as part of the house; they feel fully its disgrace and await justice."

[129] Garvie 1986: 284 suggests that "[t]his is not characterization for its own sake. Aeschylus…is beginning to prepare the audience for the isolation of Orestes at the end of the play." I agree that this need say nothing more about the Chorus than that they are slaves who will suffer tremendously if Aegisthus survives and their role in the plot comes to light, but is hard to believe that their desire to distance themselves from

When Clytemnestra emerges to face her lover's killer, she is back to her old ways. She grabs an axe to defend herself from her son, but she also makes a case of sorts for herself. She acknowledges that she will be killed in recompense for the murder she committed, but she also makes an appeal to Orestes' sympathy which gives him pause (896-98, 908; 899), draws attention to the role of fate in bringing about Agamemnon's death (910), alludes to Agamemnon's crimes (918), and warns of the punishment that will inevitably follow Orestes' deed (912, 923). Her case is not, however, as strong as it might have been. While she alludes to arguments that she made at greater length in the *Agamemnon*, her failure to spell them out may have diminished their effectiveness at this time. The case she does make is largely overshadowed by the reminder, presented in striking fashion by the formerly silent Pilades, of Apollo's support for her murder (900-2). Thus, she may deserve death in the eyes of most spectators. Even the impact of the act of matricide may be lessened by Orestes' accusations that she rejected him by casting out and "selling" him (913, 915-17).

Once Orestes has killed his mother, the justice of the deed appears to be affirmed by the Chorus's recounting of the murder of Agamemnon (937-38), its celebration at the house's escape from the evils perpetrated by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (942-45), the suggestion that Orestes was guided by Dike, the daughter of Zeus (948-51), and their assurance that whatever pollution Orestes has incurred from the murder of his mother will be cleansed in time (965-71). Orestes further justifies his act with the physical reminder of his mother's "unclean," "hateful," and dishonorable act in the form of the device she used to bind Agamemnon (980-1003).

Orestes would not strike the audience as strange given how important a role they played in pushing him toward the murders.

But of course the *Choephori* has a surprise ending that calls into question all of the things that spectators have been led to believe about Orestes' actions. Orestes is stricken with madness and visions of his mother's wrathful dogs. The Chorus nevertheless confirms that he acted rightly, and, with his last words before succumbing to insanity, Orestes proclaims once more the justice of his deed, offers as proof Apollo's assurance that he would not be guilty if he avenged his father, and states his intention purify himself. Yet it should be clear to spectators that Apollo's assurances have proven false. Despite all the evidence offered against Clytemnestra and assurances that her murder was just retribution, he is being punished for his actions by a divine force of unspecified nature. Something has gone wrong, and spectators caught off guard are left to think back to shortcomings in Orestes' and Electra's case. The overall effect of the *Choephori* is similar to that of the *Agamemnon* in that, at its conclusion, spectators are left uncertain as to the significance of the protagonist's defining action. Yet whereas the *Agamemnon* maintains ambiguity regarding the significance of Agamemnon's murder of Agamemnon by leaving Clytemnestra's motives in question throughout the play, the *Choephori* offers a clear sense of who Orestes is and what the murder of Clytemnestra means until its final moments, in which spectators are caught off guard and forced to speculate what the onset of insanity means with regard to the act of matricide.

IV.3 EUMENIDES

The *Eumenides* begins as a one-sided account of Orestes's struggle against the monstrous Furies and of his acquittal for the murder of his mother. Roughly halfway through the play, however, the Furies begin to justify their disturbing aspect and behavior

and slowly emerge as potentially sympathetic competitors for spectators' allegiance. The Furies are initially portrayed literally as monsters with whom no one would consider sympathizing.[130] The Pythia compares them to gorgons and harpies with oozing eyes; if the reaction of this internal audience is any indication and the *Life of Aeschylus* is to be trusted (9), their costumes were designed to shock and frighten spectators. According to Apollo, they are a source of evil (71) and delight in blindings, beheadings, castration, and mutilation (186-90), heinous acts that may have had greater resonance to the degree that they were seen as barbaric practices.[131] For these reasons, spectators learn that they are hated by the gods and by men (73, 190-91) and have no place among them (69-71). Lastly, the Furies are guilty by association. They take their commands from Clytemnestra, the villain of the *Choephori*, whose guilt is clearly established by her punishments in the Underworld (95-99) and who has no qualms about demanding that they drink her son's blood (137-9).

Orestes emerges as a sympathetic victim not only of the Furies, but of divine jockeying. His belief in the *Choephori* that Apollo drove him to act is corroborated by no less than Apollo himself (84, cf. 64-5),[132] and the Furies hold Apollo almost entirely responsible for the act (198-204). Nevertheless, Orestes finds himself in the unenviable position of having been forced by Apollo to act and being punished for it by the Furies. The Pythia's reference to Pentheus' story (24-6) reinforces the idea of a human

[130] Spectators may have been more open to sympathize with them if they knew that these were in fact the Semnai Theai or associated them with cults of the Eumenides. See, however, Sommerstein 1989: 10-12.
[131] See Sommerstein 1989: 114, according to whom these "executions, tortures and mutilations" were "believed to be…practised by the Persians."
[132] A skeptical spectator of the *Choephori* might have pointed out that Orestes was the audience's only source regarding Apollo's pronouncement and that it is at least possible that he misinterpreted the oracle in which Apollo supposedly communicated his wishes.

victimized by the gods, and spectators are likely to have felt for Orestes in this impossible situation.

Questions are raised about Orestes' actions and Apollo's support for them: Clytemnestra alludes to his crimes (100); the Furies denounce him as a godless mother-killer and question the justice of the act (151-4); they accuse Apollo of defiling his temple with blood and breaking divine laws (166-7, 169-72) and allude to the thrones of the younger gods "dripping with blood" (164); the image conjured up by the Pythia of Orestes covered in the blood of Aegisthus and his mother (41-42) may also have given spectators pause. Yet, in spite of these potentially incriminating indications, there is no reason to suppose that Apollo ordered Orestes to commit an unholy crime. His credentials, so to speak, and the fact that he speaks on behalf of Zeus, are established early by the Pythia's opening speech (19).

The scene ends with Apollo scoring points for Orestes. He points out the hypocrisy of the Furies' punishing Orestes while ignoring the wife who killed her husband simply on the basis that she was not related by blood. He accuses them of dishonoring Hera, Zeus, and Aphrodite, who guarantee the marriage pledge (213-16). In fact, it is the Furies' opposition to the Olympian gods, asserted here by Apollo and elsewhere by the Furies themselves, that, more than anything else, is likely to have convinced spectators of the injustice of their position. The Furies will establish their divine allotment, and the delicate balance between the Olympians and the nether powers will come to light later in the play, but here the Furies appear to be acting on their own and in violation of divine laws. In defending Orestes from the Furies, then, Apollo appears to be playing his canonical role killing monsters for the sake of humanity.

At Athens, the Furies' potentially valid claims are overshadowed by their bloodthirstiness and their continued opposition to the Olympians. They echo the Chorus of the *Choephori* in asserting that there is no atoning for the shedding of a mother's blood and that it must be punished (261-2, 267-68). They claim to be just (269-72, 312). They insist that they do not harm the innocent (313-20). They punish those who kill kin (336-39, 354-59) and bring low the proud and thoughtless (368-76). They insist that Fate and the gods have allotted them these duties (334-5, 349, 391-5). There is very little to disagree with in all of this, but spectators' approval for them may have been threatened by the Furies' profession that the smell of human blood makes them laugh (253), their promise to drive Orestes' mad (328-30), drink his blood, and feast upon him (264-66, 305), the claim that they are δυσπαρήγοροι βροτοῖς (384), "hard for mortals to appease," and that mortals should fear them (389-90), and their defiance and belittling of the Olympian gods (299-302, 323-27, 360-66, 385-86).

The case that is brought before Athena is relatively straightforward if not easily decided. The Furies insist that Orestes is guilty of murdering his mother and must therefore be punished. Apollo and Orestes admit that Orestes killed his mother, but maintain that the act is justified by the dishonorable murder of Agamemnon. Just as important, as it turns out, is Orestes assertion that he has already been purified for the deed (235-39, 276-86, 445-52). The events of the last half of the *Eumenides* are prepared for, and to some degree dictated by, Athena's initial response to the situation with which she is presented. She considers Orestes to have been purified and to be without blame (καθαρὸς ἀβλαβὴς, 474-5),[133] but also warns that the Furies' "allotted function"

[133] See Lesky 1982: 89, Sommerstein 1989: 124-5 for issues regarding Orestes' purification.

(μοῖραν) cannot be easily dismissed (οὐκ εὐπέμπελον, 476) and that their anger, should they lose the case, will threaten the land. So, Orestes will be acquitted in a trial (566-777), and Athena will appease the Furies by giving them a meaningful position in her city from which to carry out their duties (778-1031).[134] Yet if spectators are to accept these developments, their perception of Orestes' struggle against the Furies has to change. Their view of Orestes must remain positive or at least neutral so that they will not balk at his acquittal. The Furies' image must be rehabilitated so that spectators will not balk at their incorporation into the city.[135]

The play moves toward the second of these goals with "The great "change-over" ode (Rosenmeyer 1982: 167), which the Furies sing in the moments before the trial. Absent are the Chorus's bloodthirsty pronouncements. Instead, they offer a reasoned explanation for their role in human affairs that could be calculated to make spectators reevaluate previous judgments of them and perhaps question their allegiance to Orestes and Apollo (cf. Sommerstein 1989: 171-2). The Furies argue that Orestes' acquittal will lead to more violence by children against parents who will have nowhere to turn for justice and requital (494-98, 508-16). They assert that, without them, there will be no end of evils and suffering (503-7). They maintain that the fear they inspire is not a destructive, but rather a constructive social tool that inspires wisdom and justice both in people and in *poleis* (517-25). They present themselves as representatives of justice,

[134] Dawe 1963: 58 observes that "[t]he audience is to be in no doubt that if justice is to prevail, he must be acquitted; but they must not doubt either that the issue for which he is on trial is a live one." According to Gagarin 1976: 113, "Athena understands that the freeing of Orestes is a political necessity, both for the stability of Argos and for the resultant benefit to Athens. But, rather than make a decision on her own, which might permanently alienate the Furies, she establishes the court to protect their interests."

[135] Dawe 1963: 58 offers a similar but slightly different take on this point: "[t]he court scenes would be intolerable if the possibility of condemnation had been expressly excluded from the very beginning; hence the audience has to be persuaded into accepting (a) that Orestes is free from blame in the eyes of Zeus and Apollo, and (b) that the charge against him is still valid."

advising mortals to be moderate (526-31), speaking of the dangers of impiety that leads to *hybris* (533-34), and warning mortals to honor guests, hosts, and parents while rejecting injustice and impudence.[136] Their argument is presented in a convincing fashion, and, thus, the Furies are placed on more or less equal footing with Apollo and Orestes going into the trial (Lesky 1983: 87, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 165, Rosenmeyer 1982: 167).[137]

Given that Orestes must be acquitted without doing excessive dishonor to the Furies, it is no surprise that, as evidenced by Athena's refusal to pass judgment in the matter and by the tie vote of the Athenian jurors, the trial itself is something of a stalemate (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 124).[138] Initially, the Furies appear to get the better of Orestes and Apollo, and spectators may even have been intended to consider seriously the possibility that Orestes would lose the case. Orestes is forced to give way, and Apollo then tries to sway the jury by recounting Agamemnon's humiliating death at the hands of his own wife. The exchange that follows does little to advance the arguments of either side. Apollo's claim that Zeus, from whom his authority is derived, gives precedence to the father is undercut by the Furies' assertion that Zeus was willing to dishonor Kronos (640-43). Yet in that case, as Apollo points out, the father was not

[136] Sommerstein 1989: 172 observes that the Furies' position is slightly misleading: "we may note that the predicted epidemic of unavenged murder is envisaged, not as the automatic and inexorable consequence of Orestes' acquittal itself, but as resulting from the Erinyes' own *refusal* to continue punishing the guilty (499-501, 508-12) if they are cheated of this particular prey."

[137] Winnington-Ingram 1983: 120 notes that "at this point the reaction of the audience is bound to be sympathetic."

[138] I do not see the trial as satire or especially grand in design. The scene makes sense in the dramatic context of Athens, in which the Semnai are to be located and, with its specific allusion to the Areopagus and general resemblance to Athenian practices, speaks to spectators' experience. It may also have been part of the tradition before Aeschylus. See Sommerstein 1996: 203. In other respects, however, it is an essential but not particularly resonant way to move the plot forward. See Lebeck 1971: 135-8 for a survey of critical responses to the trial scene. Lebeck 1971: 138 observes that "[t]he trial is only shadow play, but behind the irrelevant and tricky arguments, the appeal to self-interest, there lies the will of Zeus, irrevocable, incomprehensible, and just."

killed. Apollo's controversial argument that women are nurses rather than true parents of their children (658-666) is unlikely to have been intended as a decisive argument (Cf. Lebeck 1971: 124-30 and Sommerstein 1989: 206-8). Rather it appears to be a clever point that would appeal to the motherless Athena who presides over the case.[139] The promise that he and Orestes will ally themselves to Athens likewise seems a prudent move, but one that would not convince anyone of the merit of their case.[140]

Athena's speech and Apollo and the Furies' debate leading up to the vote may have further convinced spectators that Orestes and Apollo would lose. Athena appears to endorse the Furies' position, echoing, almost verbatim in some cases, the sentiment expressed in the Furies' "change-over" ode. According to Athena, reverence (σέβας) and fear (φόβος) will keep the court from injustice, and, like the Furies, she advises her people to reject anarchy and despotism and to accept fear in their city under the influence of which they will win justice, reverence, and safety (696-703). The court that she establishes resembles the Furies in that it will be "quick to anger and a wakeful guardian of the land (705-6)." The fact that it will also be κερδῶν ἄθικτον (704), "untouched by concerns for gain" might have counted against Apollo and his attempts to convince the court with promises of aid. Although Apollo once more claims to have Zeus's support, his reference to Ixion (717-18), who, according to traditional stories, was acquitted of murder, but went on to attempt a worse crime against Zeus and his wife, does not bode well for Orestes' case. It is hard to know who is helped when the Furies recall another

[139] Sommerstein 1989: 208 suggests that it would be perceived as "a clever and specious but fallacious piece of forensic pleading."
[140] Bribery and threats abound on both sides of the case. The promise of future aid can hardly be faulted given that the opposing side promised to destroy the city should they lose.

inglorious instance in which Apollo intervened on behalf of a mortal and dishonored elder gods (723-24).

In the end, Orestes is acquitted, but an equal vote and the fact that Athena's tying vote is based solely on her particular (and unique) circumstances,[141] encourages spectators to see the validity of both sides of the dispute. In this way, the play allows them both to accept Orestes' acquittal and to see at the same time the validity of the Furies' anger, with which the rest of the play is concerned. When Orestes departs,[142] the Furies immediately lament the decision and the dishonor that they believe has been done to them, and they threaten to bring destruction to Athens. In the exchange that follows, Athena weathers the Furies' storm while attempting to convince them that they have been neither defeated nor dishonored and that there is a place of honor for them in the city of Athens. The Furies display some of their earlier stubbornness, but in doing so, give Athena a chance to sing their praises and powers and give spectators the sense that the Furies' grievances have been sufficiently aired and answered by Athena. Their final

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[141] Sommerstein 1989: 229 argues that, despite appearances, Athena votes for Orestes because she considers Clytemnestra's crime worse than Orestes', not because she lacks a mother and supports her father in everything he does. He suggests that "[r]ather than assert that she believes their cause to be unjust, she makes it appear that she is constrained to vote as she does by her masculine pyche (itself the result of her mother less birth) and by filial loyalty (which might be regarded, even by the loyal child's opponents, as overriding the claims of justice…." I maintain that her emphasis on that aspect of her decision would convince many spectators as well. See Gagarin 1976: 77 and Sommerstein 1989: 221-26 on the particular way in which the acquittal is achieved, i.e., whether Athena's vote makes the tie which goes to Orestes (the view which I favor) or whether her vote breaks the tie in favor of Orestes.

[142] Orestes' promise of Argive support for Athens need not be seen as an attempt on Aeschylus' part to curry favor with spectators, for which attempt, see Sommerstein 1997: 74. As discussed above, spectators' feelings about Orestes' acquittal may be somewhat mixed. His sentiments only show that Athens and Argos were allied when the *Oresteia* was performed (or at least composed). Whether they supported Argos or Sparta, spectators could appreciate the fact that the situation put forth by the play is borne out by real events in their time: Orestes' acquittal results in an Argive alliance with Athens, the evidence of which spectators can see in Athens and Argos' current alliance with one another. Cf. Goldhill 2000: 55: "The inscription of the political language of Orestes' final speech in the narrative web of the *Oresteia* thus encourages the dissemination of political discourse by interweaving even the terms of military alliance within the discourse of divinity, action, causation, power, memory, ritual that so dominate the narrative of the trilogy."

transformation is marked by the series of blessings, which they confer upon the city and its inhabitants, and which are likely to have endeared them to spectators, and by a visual cue of their conversion in the form of a costume change when they don the purple robes that identify them as metics in the city of Athens (1028-29). Whereas developments in the first two plays in the trilogy left the spectators without a clear sense of the nature of its primary dramatic characters, the Furies undergo a striking but decisive transformation that is reenacted and affirmed over the last third of the play.[143] This is not to say that the play ends without lingering questions and doubts. The Furies' transformation is not complete: they are still capable of punishing the city if it does not honor them (Sommerstein 1989: 262). But at the *Eumenides*' conclusion, the play's action has been resolved, and a level of finality has been reached with regard to the Furies and their role in the cosmos.

[143] We will see this pattern of ambiguity in the nature of dramatic characters at the conclusion of the first two plays of trilogies (cf. the *Suppliants* and the *Prometheus Bound*) as compared with some degree of clarity, or at least finality, in the final play (cf. the *Seven against Thebes*). The *Persians*, a self-contained tragedy, exhibits both of these qualities.

CHAPTER I: XERXES AND HIS SUBJECTS IN AESCHYLUS' *PERSIANS*

INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the invasion of 480, Persia threatened the very survival of Athens and its inhabitants with a force of made up of countless nations and of unprecedented size. Although Athenians would have been aware that there were Greeks amidst Xerxes' army, sympathizing with them would have been the last thing on their minds. When Aeschylus' *Persians* was produced less than a decade later in 472, the situation had changed drastically. The Persian threat had receded, if not disappeared; territorial skirmishes would continue for another twenty years, but nothing on the scale of the Persian wars.[144] Perhaps more important, cities and peoples who had fought alongside the Persians were being, and in some cases already had been, brought back into federation with those who had stood against the invaders.

During a time when Athens was inviting former Persian subjects into its own empire, it would not be surprising to find some Athenians thinking more deeply about the experiences of those who once fought on the side of the Persians. The shift from enemies to allies would have been a complicated and ongoing process. The Athenians certainly sought retribution against some of the factions that had fought with the Persians (cf. Thuc. 1.98.1-2), but they also embraced others, notably when they sided with the Ionians and "as many as were newly freed from the King" against Pausanias, who sought to punish them for their actions (Thuc. 1.95.1-2). The Delian league would eventually encompass many cities that were once under Persian sway. Stories emerging from these cities about life under the Persians would undoubtedly have stoked Athenians' curiosity

[144] Hall 1996: 4 notes that "unfavourable references to 'the Mede' were never actually deleted from the Assembly's prayers…"

about the Empire in whose shadow they had been living for the past 70 years and against whom they had now fought and won two decisive victories (cf. Hall 1996: 14). These stories, told, perhaps in Greek, by people much like themselves, might have disposed Athenians to a more sustained and potentially sympathetic exploration of the other side's experience in the wars such as we find in Aeschylus' *Persians*. And the audience of the theater may actually have included some Ionians and other foreigners who had felt the effects of Persian rule firsthand.[145] Of course, not all spectators would have been so interested in or feel so charitable toward their enemies. We find Aeschylus trying to strike a balance between these two positions in this play.

The *Persians* affords spectators the opportunity to experience a range of potentially contradictory experiences that include fear of the Persian invaders and sympathy with the inhabitants of the Persian Empire, with the men who fought against them in the war, and perhaps even with Xerxes himself, all in an environment made safe by the knowledge that the Greeks won the war.[146] These responses, hatred for the Persians, sympathy for Persian subjects, sympathy for the army, and sympathy for Xerxes, are invited but not forced upon spectators more or less in succession over the course of the play, each requiring that spectators distance themselves to a greater degree from the events of 480 and 479. What is striking is the degree to which the *Persians* is able to accommodate all of these relationships between spectators and the characters in the play.

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[145] Csapo and Slater 1994: 287 note the increasingly international nature of the Greater Dionysia, but suggest that it occurred later in the 5th c. It is unclear how many foreigners one could expect to attend the tragic performances in 472, but highly likely that their were some in attendance.

[146] This is at least the case in the second half of the play where it frequency reminds spectators that the Persians have been entirely vanquished.

Before proceeding, it is worth looking at some broad trends in the audience's response to the events depicted in this play. Some spectators would have been incapable of seeing past their hatred for all things Persian, whether because of an ideological commitment to Athenian independence and democracy, because they risked their life in battle with the Persians at Marathon, Salamis or in one of the continuing military operations, because they lost friends and family in the wars, or because their homes and temples were destroyed by the Persians who invaded Athens. Rather than focus on the implication of Salamis for the Persians, these spectators may have been sustained by the play's praise of Athens and Greece as standard-bearers of freedom and by the up-close spectacle of the Persians' downfall. The most nationalistic audience members may have reveled in the idea of the entire Persian Empire suffering as they would have had Athens and Greece suffer. Yet spectators who celebrated the total defeat of the army, might still feel a pang of sympathy for the Persian women and children who caused Athens no harm, yet suffered nevertheless as a result of what happened.

The idea that the soldiers who fought against the Greeks were in some sense sympathetic victims of Xerxes and Persian rule would have required that spectators adopt an even more objective view of the war. This idea certainly would have appealed to those in the audience who had been forced to fight with the Persians, such as islanders and Ionians. It could also have appealed to any Athenians who supported Medizing prior to the wars in order to ensure the safety of their families and themselves or to those spectators who could sympathize with the plight of the weaker cities that were forced to

give in to the Persians.[147] These spectators may even have perceived a corollary between their position under Persia and their position under the burgeoning Athenian Empire. Men who fought in the war on the Greeks' side might tend to be the most vocal in their opposition to Persia, but they might also have been able to empathize with the position of other enlisted men, regardless of whom they serve.

Spectators who sympathized with the soldiers and the other victims of Persian rule would be predisposed to find blame with the Empire and with Xerxes, its ruler. Those who adopted this position would certainly have been reluctant to accept that Xerxes was in any sense a victim, either of the gods or his own foolishness. Yet some audience members, particularly spectators who no longer considered Persia a threat of any kind, may have seen in him a figure "paradigmatic for Greeks and foreigners alike in his susceptibility to ambition and rashness, [with] his belated regrets and recognition of mistakes, and his distracted grief at the loss of friends, dependents, property, and honor" (Griffith 1998: 44). These spectators could have taken home a lesson, or warning, about human suffering and the fickleness of the gods and fate, regardless of their opinions of the individuals presented in the play.[148]

Other factors would also have affected spectators' responses. Age could have been a factor. Older spectators might have felt continuing resentment toward Persia for its support of the Pisistratids in 500/1 or of tyranny in general, but they might also recall a time when Athens approached the Persians for help against encroaching tyrants after Pisistratids were expelled (in 510). These spectators might have resented the Persians'

[147] These spectators may even have even found a corollary between their position under Persia and under the burgeoning Athenian Empire. See Rosenbloom 1995.
[148] Cf. Sidgwick 1902: ix, Podlecki 1966: 8, Gagarin 1976: 52-3, McCall 1986: 43, Meier 1993: 71, and Bordaux 1993: 76.

sacking of Miletus in the Ionian Revolt, but also remember their part in the sacking of Sardis, at least one of the reasons for the Persians' perhaps justified anger against them. The bias shown in the play toward Athens, as is evident from the number of references to Athens and from the emphasis placed on the battle of Salamis, might have rankled the most anti-Athenian audience members. Yet these allusions could have been countered by the play's general praise of Greek courage and the repeated cries for Greek freedom in the face of despotism. Likewise, though the emphasis on the battle of Salamis may have been seen by some spectators as praise of Themistocles or elevation of the Athenian rowers over the less economically diverse Marathonomachoi,[149] it is unlikely that spectators who were not directly involved in these disputes would have been unduly distracted by such concerns during the play.

Class may also have been an important factor in the way that spectators viewed the play. Judging by the cases of elite Athenians such as the Pisistratids and Themistocles relocating to Persia, and by the accusations against them of Medizing, Athenians of the upper classes may have felt some affinity for Persian rule. These Athenians might have felt a kind of kinship to Xerxes and sense that they understood his particular struggles.[150] Interestingly, we find in the play arguments against Xerxes' rule that appear to be aimed at the particular concerns and interests of an elite audience.

The *Persians* is the first extant play of Aeschylus and the subject of this first chapter of my dissertation. It is not, however, a model for subsequent plays or chapters. The *Persians* is an exceptional play in a number of ways. Given the emphasis I place in

[149] Podlecki 1966: 8-26 argues that the play is intended to help Themistocles' reputation around the time of his ostracism.
[150] See in particular Griffith 1998.

this dissertation on the way the depiction of primary characters can shift over the course of a play, it is noteworthy that one of the primary "characters" with whom spectators' relationship changes in this play is the Persian people,[151] despite the fact that they do not appear on stage, though their interests are sometimes represented by the Chorus (cf. Groeneboom 1960: 10, Gagarin 1976: 43, Garvie 1978: 68, Schenker 1994: 285). This is also the only play that I will treat that was not, as far as we know, part of a connected trilogy. As such, though it is technically the second play of its trilogy, after *Phineus* and before *Glaucus*, it exhibits in condensed fashion features which I identify with first, second, and third plays of connected trilogies. Finally, this is the only extant play of Aeschylus that is based on relatively recent historical events involving Athens rather than ancient myths. Thus, as may already be clear, Aeschylus' appeal to spectators' cultural assumptions in eliciting responses to the dramatic characters is in most cases done in a more straightforward and more obvious way than in the other plays. Whereas in other cases, assumptions from contemporary Athens are mediated through stories from the ancient, mythical past, in this play there is often a one-to-one correspondance between cultural assumptions and their target in the world of the play.

I THE PERSIAN THREAT?

From the outset, the *Persians* presents its spectators with a dilemma. The Chorus describes in the parodos a potentially sympathetic situation: the city's fighting force has gone off to war. Those they left behind, their parents, children, and wives, are left alone, yearning for their return, taking pride in the strength of their army, but unsure whether

[151] Broadhead 1960: 96 notes that "[t]hroughout the play it is the *Persian* warriors and the *Persian* people that receive most attention."

they will come home safely. Yet spectators immediately learn that these are not people from one of the ancient myths in whose experiences they can safely imagine their own. These are Persians. The men for whom they are pining have been sent off to conquer and enslave the Greeks. The description of the absent force emphasizes the difference between these men and those of Athens and may have been calculated to remind spectators of the fear they felt when they learned that Xerxes was leading an expedition against them.

I.1 A SYMPATHETIC CHORUS

There can be no mistaking that the elders who compose the Chorus of the *Persians* are in fact Persian and that the men about whose welfare they and the rest of Persia are concerned have been sent to destroy Greece and enslave its inhabitants. In fact, the Chorus clearly identify themselves not just as Persians, but as exalted leaders of Persia who are guarding lavish, gold-filled thrones and faithful in the service of Xerxes (1-7). The Ionic meter of the parodos and the words and names the Chorus sings may also have sounded "exotic" to the ears of many spectators (Broadhead 1960: xxx) and given "the impression of barbarian speech" (Hall 1989: 77).[152]

And yet, despite its foreign appearance and affiliation to the Persian Empire, the Chorus of the *Persians* invites spectators' sympathy and allegiance from the outset of the play by wearing their emotions on their sleeves, thereby allowing fuller alignment, and by emphasizing the pitiable position in which they and the rest of Persia now find

[152] Cf. Hall 1996: 23, 109. Irigoin 1993: 5, Sommerstein 1996: 72-3, and Hall 1996: 83 note that the use of ionic meter may have given the parodos Asiatic, and perhaps feminine overtones. One can imagine the Chorus moving and dancing in ways that were associated with the East, though we of course have no evidence of this.

themselves. The Chorus gives spectators an unfiltered look into the Persians' emotional state in the army's absence. They evoke the experience of those left behind in war. They hope for the success of their army, but are well aware of the consequences should it fail. They inform spectators that the entirety of Persia's fighting force has departed and that there has been no word of them (14-5; cf. 126-31). They sing, meanwhile, of women yearning for their husbands (132-36)[153] and of wives, parents, and Asia itself counting the days until their return and fearing the worst (61-64).[154] The Chorus even go so far as to imagine the city bereft of men and the women rending their dresses (115-25).[155] Most of Aeschylus' audience could have understand the situation that the Chorus describes and may have found the old men's situation particularly poignant. Many of them would have had personal experience with the reality of war, whether they were participants in one of Athens' military expeditions during this period who left family behind or they were the ones left behind.[156]

The Chorus's prescience regarding the defeat of Persia would have made them more reliable figures in the eyes of many spectators. Like every other Persian left behind, the Chorus members are worried about what will happen, but, in their anxiety, they show a deeper awareness of the situation. Their heart is not just "troubled" (ὀρσολοπεῖται) about the homecoming of King and his army, but a κακόμαντις, a "prophet of evil." At one point, they become supremely confident in Persian preeminence

[153] The effect of this image may have been slightly undercut when the missing husband is described as θούριος, "raging," a term earlier used to describe Xerxes.
[154] The Chorus, whose advanced age was likely emphasized by masks and halting movements, may have served as visual representation of the fearful parents.
[155] Hall 1996: 117 suggests that "clothes-rending" is a pursuit "in which Aeschylean barbarian choruses specialise (cf. *Choeph.* 28-31), but it is certainly a pursuit in which Greek women also took part.
[156] If it was being done this early, the procession of orphans shortly before the performance of the tragedies might also be a fitting reminder for those in the audience of the consequences of war.

(86-92), but, as if recognizing the folly of this assertion,[157] immediately observe that no one can escape divine deception when Ruin (Ἄτα) coaxes them into her inescapable nets (96-100).[158] This insight not only proves sound, but is also in keeping with popular, or at least prevalent, Greek thinking on the working of the gods in human affairs. This might also have endeared the Chorus to spectators.[159]

From the perspective of the audience sitting in the seats of the theater in 472, Persia's defeat was a demonstrated fact. Yet neither the Persians nor the Greeks would have easily predicted Persia's defeat prior to its actual occurrence in 480, when the Chorus are supposed to be singing. One can appreciate how this aspect of the Chorus was supposed to affect an audience of Athenians who knew that Persia would be defeated by imagining how it would have struck them to see the Chorus of Persian men boasting that they would easily dispatch the Greeks. Despite all of the indications that point to a Persian victory, this Chorus understands the divine forces through which even the mightiest can come to disaster. Their thoughtful response to Persia's situation may have suggested to spectators that they possess a certain amount of wisdom and, thus, that their response to the events that ensue should not be immediately dismissed. If this were anyone else, the Chorus's pitiable position and their insight would likely have been sufficient to make spectators feel some allegiance to them. Because of who the Chorus

[157] De Romilly 1974: 17 notes that the common belief in the φθόνος θεῶν, the "envy of the gods," i.e., that "success itself can be disturbing in so far as it conceals a trap" may explain the shift in the Elders' thinking.
[158] These lines may have stood out for audiences because they form a "mesode," a longer, unaccompanied strophe in the middle of a series of responding strophes and antistrophes composed in ionic minors (65-113). Irigoin 1993, however, argues that one can and should divide the mesode into strophe and antistrophe. A more serious issue is the placement of these lines. Editors since O. Müller have placed the mesode after lines 101-114, judging its pessimistic tone better suited after the observations regarding the delicate bridge on the wide and the stormy sea. For a discussion of the emendation, see Sidgwick 1903: 7, Groeneboom 1960, 30-1, Broadhead 1960: 53-58, Miller 1983, Wilson 1986, and Irigoin 1993. See below.
[159] See Conacher 1974: 145-48 for a discussion of the "Solonian" nature of this sentiment.

is, some spectators would never have been able to feel sympathy or allegiance to them, and others may have needed more convincing before feeling anything other than contempt or fear when faced with Persian elders. Nevertheless, we can see that the playwright is making some effort to make the Chorus as sympathetic as possible under the circumstances.

Finally, spectators' allegiance to the Chorus may have been encouraged because they are not just aligned with them, there is no other competition from spectators' sympathies. Though most Athenians would be unlikely to show much sympathy for a group of Persian elders, the description of Xerxes' army of foreign invaders makes these feeble old men the least threatening and so most sympathetic figures treated in the play thus far. This, in conjunction with the universal nature of their suffering and their recognition of Persia's susceptibility to the whims of the gods, may have been enough to suggest to most spectators that these men will be reliable guides through the events portrayed in the rest of the play.

I.2 The Barbarian Threat

Whereas spectators might have recognized something familiar in the response of the Chorus and in the experiences of the other Persians who have been left behind, the list of departed leaders presents a distinctively foreign and threatening incarnation of the Persians that is likely to have invited widespread distaste for the army (cf. Craig 1924: 99 and Assäel 1993: 18). The Chorus uses terms to describe the Persians that were, or would become, stereotypical and give a sense of the enemy as distinctly "other." They emphasize the army's heterogeneity and their luxury, two hallmarks of the Greek view of

the barbarians who comprised the Persian Empire.[160] The geographically diverse list of subject peoples bear witness to the variety of soldiers held loosely under Persia's sway.[161] The elders characterize the forces as a πάμμεικτον ὄχλον, a "confused crowd," with disjointed movements (Βαβυλὼν … πέμπει σύρδην) (53-54). The term ὄχλος (42, 53) may have "anticipate[d] the disordered rabble (see 422, 470) which the whole host is to become…" (Conacher 1974: 150). Material wealth and luxury are the common thread that runs through this disparate mass (Clifton 1963: 112, Kelley 1979: 214; Avery 1983: 177; Sommerstein 1996: 72). Large quantities of gold lie at home in Persia (4-5), in Sardis (45), and in Babylon (51).[162] More striking for a Greek audience, the army itself is πολυχρύσος (9), "rich in gold." The Lydians in particular are singled out for their soft and luxurious lifestyle (ἁβροδιαίτων…Λυδῶν ὄχλος, 41-2).[163] Even the reference outside of the catalogue to the Persian women as ἁβροπενθεῖς (135),[164] "luxuriating in grief" may be a play on this aspect of barbarians as perceived by Greeks (Clifton 1963: 113-4). This adjective is an indication of the depth of the pain the women feel, but may

[160] According to Hall 1989: 80, "the three main flaws in the barbarian psychology selected for repeated emphasis are its hierarchicalism, its immoderate luxuriousness, and its unrestrained emotionalism." Evidence of at least two of these, hierachicalism and luxuriousness, can be found in the Chorus's list. Evidence of unrestrained emotionalism may be found in the description of Xerxes.

[161] Michelini 1982: 91 notes that "[t]he usual association of barbarian armies with an undifferentiated mob is certainly present in the *Persians*; the anapaestic catalogue of the host underlines the lack of cultural identity" but also points out that "the catalogue form with its echoes of epic leaves no way clear to decide between the pejorative and the honorific significances of the army's greatness and diversity." See also Saïd 2007: 72.

[162] Sardis, Babylon and the thrones of Persia are all described as πολύχρυσοι, "with much gold." Saïd 2007: 74 and Hall 1996: 80 note that the Persian race is described as "golden," in reference to their descent from Perseus. The idea of a "golden race," though undeniably exotic, may also remind the audience that the Persians were thought to be descended from a Greek hero and have a humanizing effect on this foreign enemy. The emphasis on gold may have been seen in opposition to Athenian silver.

[163] Hall 1996: 111 notes that the term ἁβρος, here used to describe inhabitants of the Persian Empire is elsewhere used of "the delicacy of young women (Hesiod fr. 339 *MW*), goddesses, and young eastern gods (Sappho frr. 44.7, 128, 140.1 *PLF*)."

[164] Avery 1964: 177 notes that ἁβροπενθεῖς is an emendation for ἀκροπενθεῖς taken from the scholia by Paley and accepted by most editors. See, however, Groeneboom 1960: 39.

also suggest that their lamentation is somehow excessive and unlike that of their Greek counterparts.

In spite of the Persian Empire's luxury and heterogeneity, however, it is a formidable force. The army's heterogeneity is balanced to a large extent by the Chorus's emphasis on another stereotypical aspect of the empire, namely their dependence on hierarchy. The rigorously hierarchical nature of the Persian army is conveyed through the frequent repetition of words denoting various kinds of leaders (ταγοί, 23; βασιλῆς, 24, 44; ἐφοροι, 25; ἀρχων, 36; δίοποι, 45; cf., ἐφέπων) as well as words denoting the act of following (41, 57) and obedience, particularly to the king (ὕποχοι, 24, cf. 58) (cf. Clifton 1963: 113, Assäel 1993: 21). The list of names and locations that convey the army's heterogeneity also convey the expanse of the empire under Xerxes' command and the size of the army (Clifton 1963: 112, Hall 1989: 93). The chorus stress this aspect of the army with repetition of words denoting size and multitude: the leaders are commanders of a great host (στρατιᾶς πολλῆς ἔφοροι, 25); the Egyptian rowers are "numberless" (πλῆθός τ' ἀνάριθμοι, 40); the Lydians make their way on "many chariots" (πολλοῖς ἅρμασιν, 46); Asia is "many-manned" (πολύανδρος, 74); Xerxes is "with many soldiers" and "many sailors" (πολύχειρ and πολυναύτας, 83).[165] This force does indeed appear to represent the entire strength of Asia (12). Finally, the barbarians' warlike nature belies their soft appearance. Implements of war such as bows (26, 30, 55, 85), chariots (46, 84), spears (51, cf. 52) and swords (56), abound throughout the Chorus's

[165] Avery 1964: 175 notes the use of "words denoting number, multitude, much" to "magnify the might and power of the Persian empire." See also Saïd 2007: 71, Hall 1989: 24-5, Assäel 1993: 18-19.

account (Hall 1989: 81).[166] The barbarians themselves are "frightening to look upon and fearsome in battle" (φοβεροὶ μὲν ἰδεῖν, δεινοὶ δὲ μάχην, 27, cf. 48), appear invincible (88), and there can be no doubting their intentions: the Lydians and the rest of the forces are bent on casting the yoke of slavery around Greece (49-50).

A list such as the Chorus's could have had a mixed effect upon spectators. Their initial ignorance as to when the *Persians* takes place would likely have been a factor. In theory, an audience who knows that Xerxes' army will be defeated could scoff at claims of its vast wealth, size, and power or count these factors toward the glory of their victory. Yet, whereas Phrynichus began his *Phoenissae* with an announcement of the defeat of the Persians, the beginning of Aeschylus' *Persians* gives no indication that the worst is already behind Athens.[167] Victory was the final outcome of the wars, but there is no dearth of tragic events in the intervening period, chief among them the evacuation and fall of Athens, when the Athenians were displaced and their homes and temples destroyed (cf. Hdt. 8.41, 51-53, 140; Thuc. 1.89).[168] The prospect of seeing an event such as this may have made spectators uncomfortable, even fearful, if the reception of Phrynichus' *Fall of Miletus* is any indication of the intensity with which an Athenian audience could respond to the dramatization of a tragic event from history (Hdt. 6.21.2).[169] The

[166] According to Hall 1996: 21, 110, 115, 148, the *Persians* associates bows, chariots, and horses in general (cf. 26, 29, 32) with Persians. Hall points out that "Aeschylus' bow/spear antithesis has been regarded as too simplistic, for of course neither weapon was historically confined to either side" (81).
[167] Goward 1999: 58 considers this an attempt at generating suspense that is "absolutely typical" of Aeschylus. The Queen's initial questions regarding Athens (230ff.) may also suggest that the play takes place at an early stage in the war.
[168] See Thomson 1981: 344-46, who discusses the reconstruction of Athens in the aftermath of the invasion but notes the damage the Athenians themselves did in building the walls.
[169] The sack of Athens is of course different than the fall of Miletus. Athens had been largely evacuated prior to the arrival of the Persians, and its fall was a setback in an eventual victory rather than the culmination of a defeat as in the case of Miletus. Athenians may also have felt some guilt with regard to Miletus,whereas the blame for Athens could be placed entirely on others.

possibility of resemblances between the Chorus's account of the Persian forces and the descriptions that reached Athens prior to the invasion of 480 might have contributed to this effect.[170]

I.3 XERXES

The Chorus's discussion of Xerxes continues and expands upon the representation of the Persian forces as frightening and alien. Xerxes and his army are presented as a unified force.[171] It is the "the King's army" (βασίλειος στρατὸς), which has already sacked cities (περσέπτολις) and now makes its way into Greece (64-72). Xerxes stands firmly at the head of the army as αὐτὸς ἄναξ Χέρξης βασιλεύς (5), "Xerxes lord king himself," a "king of kings" (24) and leader driving his flock (73-6), but he also relies on his commanders to assist him (78-9). He emerges as an almost superhuman figure when the Chorus describe him as a χρυσογόνου γενεᾶς ισόθεος φώς (80), a "man of the golden race who is equal to the gods,"[172] and say that he "casts the dark look of a murderous snake" (80-1). Like the rest of his army, he is ready for war: he is θούριος (74), "raging," rides in his war-chariot, and "leads Ares who conquers with the bow against men famed for their spears (84-5)."

[170] The Chorus's list may also have resembled accounts that reached Athens prior to the invasion of 490. Some spectators may have expected to see a tragedy on Marathon, which Hall 1996: 8 notes was the subject of a later tragedy.

[171] Schenker 1994: 286 has noted a possible early indication of Asia's burgeoning hostility toward Xerxes in line 13 when it is said in the context of the departed soldiers that Asia νέον δ' ἄνδρα βαύζει, "cries out at the young man." Hall 1996: 107-8 suggests on the analogy of *Ag.* 449-50 that the verb βαύζειν "often implies the murmured expression of secret, hostile, or disaffected sentiments" but notes that "here it may imply the foreignness of the language."

[172] See Saïd 2007: 77 for the Homeric reverberations of ισόθεος. Hall 1996 114 notes that the term has positive connotations in epic but has "overtones of excessive self-aggrandisement in tragedy." The term may also reflect Xerxes' officially granted divine status (157-8).

The Chorus's Xerxes makes for an imposing figure, and an Athenian audience might have been impressed by the power he wields. There is little that would have endeared Xerxes to them, though the reference to the golden race, which could simply be a nod to barbarian wealth but could also be perceived as a reference to the Persians' descent from the Greek hero Perseus (Hdt. 7.61, 7.150) (see Hall 1996: 114), might point to a connection between Xerxes and the Greeks that would give some spectators pause. Yet, despite the distaste many of Aeschylus' spectators would have felt for Xerxes and the knowledge that he will fail in his expedition, and in contrast to the depiction of him later in the play, the Chorus's depiction of him does not invite their disdain. There is little indication here of any personal failings on the part of Xerxes. In keeping with the idea that the Chorus is trying to evoke a terrifying picture of the Persians, Xerxes is presented as a real threat to Greece.

I.4 Bridging the Hellespont:

Glorious Achievement or the Beginning of the End

The image of Xerxes bridging the Hellespont and water imagery in general, both touched upon here for the first time in this ode, form a complex and resonant network of symbols in the *Persians* (cf. Hall 1996: 115). I will discuss them in some detail. The actual bridge that Xerxes constructed might have been a resonant sign for Athenians that held multiple levels of significance. The bridge is likely to have been a symbol of Xerxes invasion, being the means through which he was able to advance from the Chersonese, through Thrace, and down toward Athens. It was also an incredible feat of engineering

(cf. Hdt. 7.36)[173] and may have given the Greeks an indication of the vast resources, skills, and manpower which the Persians were able to call upon. After all, it was still intact when Xerxes returned home after Salamis, at least according to the *Persians* (734-6; cf. Thuc. 137.3).[174] Yet, the bridge also facilitated Xerxes' ill-advised march into Greece and could, in retrospect, be seen as the height of folly. The fact that the Athenians claimed for themselves and put on display as offerings to the gods the cables used to construct the bridge (Hdt. 9.121; Miller 1997: 37-8) is an indication of their strong, if still ambivalent feelings they held toward it. Although it is unlikely that most Greeks would consider a bridge over the Hellespont an impiety in itself (cf. Kitto 1939: 40, Conacher 1974: 164, and Gagarin 1976: 47), those looking for an explanation of the Greeks' improbable victory over a superior force may have been attracted to the bridge because of the unprecedented and seemingly impossible nature of the achievement. Perhaps there was a reason the two continents had never been bridged before,[175] an indication of impiety or overreaching, that would have brought about the enmity of the gods (cf. Adams 1983: 36). Darius' description of the bridge as an affront to the gods (744-50) would pick up on this kind of thinking. The specific nature of the crime that the bridge represented, would, however, likely be hazy in the minds of these spectators, though some may have located it in attempting "to conjoin two continents and peoples the divine and natural order meant to keep sharply divided" (Lincoln 2000: 14; cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 10-11 and Pelling 1997: 7). Herodotus' version of the events,

[173] See Hammond and Roseman 1996 for a discussion of our sources for the bridge and an attempt at reconstruction.
[174] Herodotus of course offers a different tradition in which both the Persians' first attempt at a bridge and their second, the bridge over which they cross into Greece and on which Xerxes hoped to make his way home after Salamis, are destroyed by storm (7.34; 8.117.1, 9.114.1).
[175] Cf., however, the account of Darius' bridge to Scythia in Herodotus (4.89).

in which Xerxes has the Hellespont whipped, chained, branded, and insulted (7.33), and later, regretting his actions, tries to assuage the body of water (7.54), reflects this desire to find an explanation for the Persians' defeat in Xerxes' awe-inspiring achievement, but suggests at the same time that something more than the act of bridging the Hellespont would be necessary to demonstrate impiety to a Greek audience.

Bridge and water imagery figure prominently in the parodos. The description of Xerxes, the Chorus's statement of Persian omnipotence, and their exploration of the possibility of Persia's downfall are all framed by and couched in terms of water and the bridge. Absent from these references to the bridge is the religiously charged language that Darius uses later in the play and which suggests that the bridge is fundamentally impious. Though the imagery is not fully developed in the parodos, the bridge is initially presented as the means through which Persia will conquer Greece and then as a symbol that points to her tenuous position and future downfall.

Whereas Darius describes the Hellespont as "holy" (ἱρὸν) and "god's" (θεοῦ) and claims that Xerxes wanted to conquer the gods, specifically Poseidon (749-50), the Chorus's first reference to the bridge suggests that the bridge would have been repugnant to a Greek audience not because it is an offense against the gods, but because it poses a threat to Greece. Mentioned in the context of the army's approach toward Greece, the image of the army binding and "casting a yoke around the neck of the sea" (68-72) echoes the earlier reference to enslaving Greece and reminds spectators of the purpose for which the expedition was undertaken.[176] The identification of the Hellespont with a stand-in for Greece, the mythical figure Ἕλλας (68-72), who is notably not a goddess but

[176] For the explicit verbal parallel, cf. line 50: ζυγὸν ἀμφιβαλεῖν δούλιον Ἑλλάδι, and line 71: ζυγὸν ἀμφιβαλὼν αὐχένι πόντου. See Adams 1983: 36 and Conacher 1974: 151.

a mortal, "underlines the personal aspect of the sea's enslavement" for the Athenians (Conacher 1974: 151).

A moment later, the Chorus describes the Persian Empire as a "great flood of men" and compares them to an "invincible wave of the sea," which no man can withstand (86-91). This marks the high point in the Chorus's faith in the army but, paradoxically, threatens to break the illusion of the Persian threat. Evoking the fear Athenians felt in the days before the empire is one thing, but claims of Persian invincibility would be difficult for most in the audience to countenance. In fact, it would lead many of them directly to thoughts of Persia's defeat. The Chorus's reliability as spectators' guides in the Persian court is salvaged only by their immediate recognition that anyone can fall due to the vagaries inherent in the human condition.[177] The falsity of the Chorus's claim may also have led spectators to search for weaknesses in the Chorus's logic. Some of these spectators may have observed that the underlying assertion that water is invincible might be seen to call into question the Persians' attempts to harness the power of the Hellespont.[178] As Michelini asserts, by attempting to harness the power of the Hellespont, "the Persians are themselves attempting the *adynaton* that they have used as an archetype of folly" (1982: 79).[179]

[177] This is perhaps the best argument against the transposition of these lines discussed above.
[178] De Romilly 1974: 37 notes that the comparison is structured in such a way as to allow the image of failing to keep out a wave of the sea and the idea of water's irresistible nature to function independently. Hall 1996 *loc. cit.* emphasizes the gnomic aspect of the assertion of water's invincibility, printing ἄμαχον κῦμα θαλάσσας as a separate clause: "a wave of the sea is unconquerable." This idea may be derived from the realities of seafaring or from the observation of water's fundamentally fluid nature. Various Presocratics including Thales acknowledge the power of water, making it one of the original elements. Its fluid nature may be at the heart of identifications of water with chaos prevalent in Mesopotamian mythology to which the Greeks had access.
[179] Groeneboom 1960: 16 suggests that the comparison of the army to water or to an unconquerable wave of the sea itself gives the sense of an impending disaster.

The next reference to the bridge moves closer to acknowledging the precariousness of the undertaking. According to the Chorus, the gods ordained (θεόθεν), in accordance with Fate (Μοῖρα), that the Persians pursue battles, in which they would deploy cavalry and sack of cities (102-8). The Persians learned to look to the sea, and have now put their faith in λεπτοδόμοις πείσμασι, "slender cables," to cross a wide (εὐροπόροιο), white-capped, and storm-tossed sea (θαλάσσας πολιαινομένας πνεύματι λάβρωι) (106-7). Scholars have noted that strophe and antistrophe contrast what is ordained by the gods and what is learned, perhaps suggesting that the learned ability is not god-given and represents a lack of "natural aptitude" for the endeavor (Miller 1983: 79; Wilson 1986).[180] The root of the Chorus's fears seems to lie, however, in Persia's dependence on slender cables to overcome the wide sea that threatens to destroy the army's lifeline.[181] The final reference to the bridge appears to be more neutral, stating that the Persians have crossed the "yoked-together headland of the sea now common to both lands" (τὸν ἀμφίζευκτον ἐξαμείψας ἀμφοτέρας ἅλιον πρῶνα κοινὸν αἴας) (128-31). This could, however, be a nod to fears of joining two lands intended to be separate.

The significance of the bridging and water images is far from obvious at this stage. Their prevalence in the parodos would at least have alerted spectators to the importance that this imagery will play as the *Persians* proceeds.[182] Although some

[180] See also Hall 1996: 116.
[181] The description of a device that allows people to pass over water (λαοπόροις μαχαναῖς) using cables could refer either to the bridge or to a ship. Broadhead 1960: 54, however, points out that the Elders do not express any fear of seafaring and seem most concerned about the army. Garvie 1978: 70 notes that "the Chorus dwell proudly upon Darius' conquest of the Aegean islands of Greece." That this periphrasis refers to the bridge seems likely in light of the reference to the bridge that appears shortly after it (130-1). See Wilson 1986: 54, 55.
[182] Spectators may also have been attuned to the importance of water if they have just seen *Phineus*, the play which precedes the *Persians* in its trilogy and which presumably treats the sea-voyage of the Argonauts.

spectators would have found the idea of the bridge to be impious and blamed Xerxes for conceiving of it, there is no suggestion in the text that this is why the bridge is mentioned. Those who did not suspect that the bridge itself was the cause of Persia's failure could have found meaning in the Persian's putting too much faith in their ability harness an unpredictable element such as water[183] and in the identification of Greece with the particular body of water which Persia has attempted to yoke. The fact that Athens considered itself the preeminent power on the sea at the time of the *Persians'* performance might have contributed to spectators' skepticism regarding the Persians' attempt to control the element. The Persians' failure to properly account for unpredictable circumstances, particularly in the context of water, certainly looks forward to Persia's decisive naval defeat at Salamis and their disaster when crossing the Strymon.

II The Queen Mother:

Elite Rulers and the Difference between Persia and Athens

The Queen embodies Persian royalty in all its glory and gives spectators a closer look at the dynamic between the Persian monarchy and its subjects. Whereas Xerxes and his army were of one mind, the Queen reveals fissures between the royal family and the people of Persia. And while Athenians both rich and poor might have been both fascinated by and even covetous of Atossa and Xerxes' status, the allure that their position might hold for Athenians is undermined by an unflattering comparison of Persia to Greece, and specifically Athens, in the remainder of the scene. Atossa's undemocratic sentiments would disturb many, if not all, of Aeschylus' spectators, and, by juxtaposing

[183] Cf. Michelini 1982: 85: "The tragic Xerxes seems to want to control water, to bind it and hold it fast, thereby violating its fluid nature."

in Atossa's dream the Persian woman, who willingly accepts the burden of slavery, and the Greek woman, who rejects the yoke, the play implicitly criticizes the behavior that Persia requires of its subjects. The depiction of the Greek woman is likely to have filled Greek viewers with pride. The most decisive argument against Persian governance as compared to that of Greece are her military defeats at the hands of the Athenians at Marathon, of which the Chorus reminds spectators, and her impending defeat, to which Atossa's dream and the omen of the hawk and eagle look forward.

II.1 A Royal Entrance

The depiction of Xerxes in the parodos shows Xerxes in his role as supreme commander of the troupes on the battlefield. Atossa's interaction with the Chorus of Persian elders gives spectators an indication of how the royal family is treated at home. It illustrates the insurmountable distance between the Queen and the Persian elders, who, as advisors to the Queen chosen to watch over Persia in Xerxes' absence, are hardly marginal figures in Persian society. In this way, Athenian spectators are given a primer in the trappings of Persian monarchy. The Chorus compare her to a ἴσον ὀφθαλμοῖς φάος (150-1), "a light equal to the eyes of the gods." They prostrate before her (προσπίτνω), an act that "impl[ies] more forcefully than words ever could the hierarchical nature of the Persian court" (Hall 1996: 119).[184] They recognize the necessity (χρεὼν) of addressing her with προσφθόγγοις μύθοισι (152-3), "words of salutation." In what could be a nod to the divinity of Persian kings, the Chorus addresses her as the

[184] According to Hall, "Although the Greeks genuflected before the images of *gods*, and when praying (Soph. *Phil*. 776), they were deeply shocked by the Persian act of obeisance towards mortal superiors, which they regarded as totally degrading." See also Clifton 1963: 113.

bed-mate of one Persian god and the mother of another (157). The Queen notes in passing that she has left her χρυσεοστόλμους δόμους (159), her "gold-decked palace." The difference in status between the Queen and the Chorus would have been reinforced by her arrival on a chariot (cf. 607) that literally places her above them.[185]

The initial impression of the Queen, surrounded by luxury and treated with extreme deference, is likely to have fascinated Athenian spectators, though their individual responses beyond that may have varied greatly.[186] Many Athenians might have rejected the display as a particularly striking encapsulation of the excesses and inequality that mark the Persian Empire and drive it to enslave every people it encounters. Yet, as Griffith observes, the same image could have appealed to some members of the audience:

> Over and over again, we find the freedom-loving Greeks—including the democratic Athenians—imagining their ideal of the bold and warlike, but intelligent and wise leader as a *king* (*basileus*), and frequently as *The King* of Persia in particular." I should make clear that I am not wanting to claim that *all* Athenians would have looked on Kyros and Dareios and other Asian potentates as unequivocally impressive and admirable models of leadership and achievement—only that *some* might, especially those who were most familiar with aristocratic lifestyle, military command, athletic competition, and property-ownership, and those who were not entirely content with democracy as the fairest or most efficient system for governing a *polis* and rewarding the merits of the best citizens (1998: 47-8; cf. 26, 46).

Some elite citizens, particularly those who aspired to the example of men like Hippias and Themistocles, who shed the burdens of democracy and took up a place of honor by King's side,[187] might have admired, perhaps unconsciously, the Queen and everything she represents. Yet even less outstanding and poor Athenians could have been seduced

[185] See Taplin 1977: 78 on her entrance upon a chariot. Taplin notes that the chariot would offer a visual representation of the symbolic yoke to which the play often returns.
[186] Kings and queens are familiar subjects in Greek Tragedy, but the deference shown the Queen seems to be greater than usual, especially the *proskyneisis*. Cf., however, Griffith 1998: 49, who argues that the Chorus simply falls before the Queen in an act that is not entirely "unGreek."
[187] Such a response in members of leading Athenian families might have been facilitated, complicated, or hampered depending on the particular families' relationship to the Persians.

by the image of the Queen, seeing in the lives of Persian royalty the fulfillment of an unattainable wish.

The handling of Atossa as a person is relatively even-handed. Nothing about the picture of her in the *Persians* suggests that spectators were intended to see her as intrinsically evil and to damn her along with the monarchy. As McClure points out, "the idea that Aeschylus sought to portray a politically influential and distastefully aggressive queen mother in the *Persae* finds little corroboration in the play; she is a woman neither domineering nor eroticized" (2006: 82).[188] What power she has is not jealously guarded as evidenced by her appeals for advice from the Elders (McClure 2006: 82). She shows concern for her son's welfare.[189] Spectators could see her as the embodiment of the women, wives and mothers, who were left behind and wait to hear of their loved ones.[190] And they may have appreciated that Atossa is not an aberrant, power-hungry monster.[191] That she is not, however, just another Persian woman left at home becomes clear over the course of the scene.

II.2 The Problem with Persia

The Queen, with her grand entrance, may have intrigued Aeschylus' spectators, and her first words are promising. The Queen echoes the Chorus's anxieties regarding

[188] McClure compares Atossa to Clytemnestra, the only other women with comparable authority in the extent plays of Aeschylus.
[189] McClure 2006: 82 notes that Atossa is regularly called a mother whereas "Clytemnestra is never once directly alluded to as a mother by the other characters in the Agamemnon except when Cassandra refers to her oxymoronically as the "mother of death."
[190] Michelini 1982: 53 emphasizes the sympathetic effect of the Queen on the audience: "It would be hard to imagine any more effective device for the production of sympathy toward such a figure than to make the audience see—not the villain himself—but his old mother."
[191] See, however, Griffith 1998: 53, who has a more negative view of the Queen, suggesting that she may be "over-protective or ambitious."

the fate of the army. Like the Chorus, she explores her anxiety and finds a proverb that reflects the Greek tendency to fear what may happen to those who are too successful: she worries μὴ μέγας Πλοῦτος κονίσας οὖδας ἀντρέψηι ποδὶ ὄλβον (163-4), "that great Wealth will kick up dust from the ground overturning our happiness." Thus far, the Queen's effect upon the audience may have been similar to the Chorus'. Spectators might have appreciated that Atossa seems capable not only of foreseeing the defeat of the Persians, but also of recognizing that the Empire's great wealth and power may be the primary cause of its downfall.

And yet, the effect was most likely undone as she proceeded. The rest of the scene amounts to an encomium of Athens and can be seen as a concerted effort to undermine any appeal that she and the royal family might have held for Athenians, rich or poor, democratic or with oligarchic tendencies. Those with even the slightest democratic inclination will have been put off when she clarifies that she does not fear for the welfare of her subjects. She is afraid of her subjects themselves, worrying that, with the army gone, wealth alone will not be enough to ensure the reverence of the people, who may therefore rise up against the monarchy (166-7).[192] The undemocratic nature of the Queen and the rule of the royals is even more pronounced when, after considering the possibility of defeat, she reminds the Chorus that Xerxes will remain King and ruler of the land whether he succeeds or fails (211-14). The Queen states that Xerxes is not "accountable" to the city, using a term, ὑπεύθυνος, that is likely to have reminded

[192] Broadhead 1960: 74; cf. Hall 1996: 122: "The Queen seems to be afraid of revolution in the absence of Xerxes and his army, as Dareios later fears both *stasis* and that the wealth he laboured to accumulate may be plundered by the first comer." The idea of revolt is already present in this reading, but it is more pronounced if one takes πλῆθος in the sense of "crowd" as the subject of σέβειν with de Romilly 1974: 42 and Hall 1996: 47. Sidgwick 1902: 13 understands here a reference not to the Persian people but to the Greeks.

Athenian spectators of their institution of the εὔθυνα, which forced Athenian magistrates to explain their actions at the end of political service and through which they could potentially be held accountable for their misdeeds.[193] The implications of the Queen's statement are made clear by her use of democratic terminology: whereas the Athenian democracy ensures oversight of its leaders and can punish them for their failures, the subjects of the Persian Empire have no say in the decision process and are beholden to the whims of their rulers (Hall 1996: 126, Sommerstein 1996: 77). Even elite Athenians, who might share Atossa's suspicions of the masses when left unchecked, are likely to have balked at the prospect of living under a rule in which they too would be forced to submit wholly to the will of the King regardless of how foolish he may be. So much for a meritocracy.

Atossa's dream, the omen, and the questions she poses to the Chorus use beliefs entrenched in Athenian thinking, as well as reminders of Athenian military superiority, to demonstrate Persia's inferiority. Atossa recounts a vivid dream (181-99), in which Xerxes attempts to yoke two women, one representative of Asia,[194] one of Greece. The dream shows the degree to which the master/slave dynamic is engrained in Xerxes' relationship to his subjects. There is nothing malicious about Xerxes' actions. The two women are fighting, and he wants to calm them down. Yet his first instinct is to yoke them to his chariot. The barbarian woman is just as quick to take up the burden, submitting willingly (cf. her εὔαρκτον στόμα, "obedient mouth") and even taking pride

[193] Broadhead 1960: 85, Hall 1989: 97 and 1996: 126. Thalmann 1980: 271 notes that "[a]lthough Xerxes' acts are not liable to scrutiny by the *polis*, "Zeus is a chastizer of too-proud designs, a heavy εὔθυνος." (lines 827-28)."

[194] She is simply called a βάρβαρον and may represent all of the Asian inhabitants of the Persian empire. Her Persian peplos suggests a particular connection to Persia. See Moreau 1993: 40-1 and Hall 1996: 124.

in the trappings of slavery: τῆιδ' ἐπυργοῦτο στολῆι, "she stood like a tower in the equipment."[195] Most Greeks are likely to have considered the idea of a woman taking the place of a horse before a chariot the height of degradation, no matter who is being conveyed,[196] and the metaphor is likely to have characterized living under the Persian Empire or any service to the King as demeaning labor that demands total submission to him (cf. Moreau 1993: 42). Spectators' reaction to the women could, however, have been more complicated. Many spectators might have looked down on the barbarian woman who submits herself to Xerxes' service, no better than an animal, but they could also have seen her as a victim of Persian rule and felt pity for her and for the people whom she represents. The passage's intimation of a deeper connection between Persia and Greece (185) might strengthen this feeling of pity.[197] At the same time, to the degree that no Greek, even those who admire the Persians and might consider taking a place at the Persian court, would take pride in being another man's slave, Greek spectators are likely to have felt vicarious pride in their representative's refusal to take up the yoke.

The dream of course has greater implications. Along with the omen of the eagle, the bigger and stronger bird, cowering before the hawk (205-10),[198] the image of the

[195] See Sidgwick 1903: 14 and Broadhead 1960: 79 for the woman's sense of pride implicit in the statement.
[196] Cf., however, Herodotus' story of Cleobis and Biton (1.31), in which their willingness to submit themselves to their mother is viewed as a demonstration of absolute devotion. Hall 1996: 124-5 also notes that "poets called young women 'fillies'," and that "on monuments chariots are usually drawn by stallions….But female figures often served as eponyms of countries."
[197] Cf. Sommerstein 1996: 76 and Moreau 1993: 41. The women are described as κασιγνήτα γένους ταὐτου, "sisters of the same race" and "daughters" of Greek and barbarian fatherlands. The basis for these lines may be the Persians supposed decent from Perseus, on which see Hall 1996: 124.
[198] Hall 1996: 125 observes that the eagle "was believed by the Greeks to be the Persians' own chosen emblem of royalty." Broadhead 1960: 83 suggests that the hawk is "sacred to Apollo" and that the "portent would recall to the minds of the audience the attack planned by Xerxes against the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Hall 1996: 124 adds that "[i]t may well be relevant that Delphi was the only temple complex not burnt by the Persians, which gave rise to oral traditions alleging that Apollo himself intervened to drive them away."

Greek woman destroying the yoke and overturning the chariot, symbols of Xerxes' power and authority (Hall 1996: 124), and casting Xerxes to the ground clearly look forward to the defeat of his army at the hands of the Greeks. In addition to being a source of pride for most of the audience, the defeat of the Persians offers decisive proof of the failings of their form of absolute rule, demonstrating that the price that the Persian monarchy demands of its people does not provide commensurate benefits, certainly not for the people, and not even for the King.

The questions Atossa poses to the Chorus and their responses echo the themes of Atossa's dream and the omen, emphasizing the servile nature of the Persians under Xerxes and reminding spectators of the Greeks', and specifically Athens', military superiority. The dialogue reasserts the antithesis between Athens and Persia, noting Athens' wealth of silver, as opposed to Persian gold, and Athenians' use of spears as compared to Persia's use of bows and arrows (238; 239-40). Atossa assumes that their army must have an absolute ruler like the Persians', and cannot fathom how they can fight invaders without one (241; 243) (cf. Sommerstein 1996: 78). The Chorus points out that they not only managed it, but did so well enough to defeat Darius' army at Marathon (244; cf. 236). In this way, spectators are reminded once more that the way in which Athens is governed is not only at odds with the Persian monarchy, but demonstrably superior, at least on the battlefield.[199]

[199] This conclusion would no doubt please most of the audience (cf. Broadhead 1960: 88, Gagarin 1976: 33, and Hall 1996: 127), and may have served as argument against any naysayers. With regard to Atossa's ignorance regarding the location of Athens or any of its defining features, which has surprised a number of critics, this may have been intended to strengthen the impression created by the Chorus's catalogue of Persian troops that the expedition is still in its early stages, thus generating suspense and making the Messenger's news that much more surprising. McClure 2006: 82 suggests that "[h]er much-discussed exchange with the chorus regarding the whereabouts of Athens and its system of government suggests a respectably secluded matron rather than a woman experienced in public life."

II.3 THE CHORUS

Throughout this scene, the play continues to portray the Chorus in a sympathetic light. They at least do little to endanger what allegiance spectators may already feel to them. The Chorus is certainly obedient to the Queen and attempt to help her, but they never cross the line into anti-Athenian rhetoric. They are in fact, to some degree, spokespersons on Athens' behalf. As in the parodos, the Chorus demonstrates some foresight and humility by acknowledging the possibility that the gods have turned against Persia (158). When they hear Atossa's dream and omen, they advise her to pray to the gods and to her dead husband for protection and blessings upon her, her children, her city, and her friends (217-19, 222, 223). The Chorus's judgment that matters will turn out well for Atossa (225) would have reminded spectators where their allegiances lie, but their failure to explicitly call for the destruction of Athens or the enslavement of Greece, which would be understandable in this context, may reflect an attempt on the part of the playwright to evade spectators' anger against them. Finally, the Chorus may have endeared themselves to some audience members by twice alluding to Marathon in their conversation with the Queen and with their rousing statement of Athenian freedom: they "are called slaves and obedient to no man" (242).[200] This certainly would not have swayed to their side a spectator who hate Persians and everything they stand for, but it would avoid alienating those who had developed a level of sympathy for the Chorus.

[200] Hall 1996: 127 suggests that "[t]here is no clearer evidence of the play's Athenocentric bias…."

III The Defeat of the Persians: Purging the Threat and Placing the Blame

Over the course of the Messenger's account of the defeat and devastation visited upon the Persians at Salamis, the Persian threat is effectively removed and the Messenger offers a sympathetic account of the Persian leaders who fell in battle. At the same time, the Persians who died at Salamis are presented as twofold victims of Xerxes' incompetence and failed leadership on the one hand, and of the gods' opposition to Xerxes' designs on the other. Some spectators would have been able to feel nothing but disdain for the Persians and pleasure at their defeat. Yet, the distance from the events and the knowledge of the Persians' defeat would have allowed others to respond sympathetically to the positive depiction of the Persian soldiers in this scene. As was the case with the Chorus earlier in the play, this tendency would be encouraged by the lack of other options for them. It is with the Greeks that the vast majority of spectators undoubtedly would have identified, but the play firmly aligns them with the perspective of the Persians throughout the account. They would be able to admire and think fondly upon the virtues that the Greeks displayed in battle only from a distance. And given the choice between Xerxes, whose foolishness, cruelty, and despotism are on full display in the battle, and the Persians, who fall victim to his questionable leadership and to his misguided plan to avenge the defeat at Marathon, there is little question with whom they would side. Many spectators, of course, could not have brought themselves to side even with the Persians. Only the involvement of the gods, whose opposition to Xerxes and the Persians is made evident, but whose reasons for opposing them remain obscure, might leave spectators in some doubt as to how they should judge Xerxes' action.

III.1 Purging the Persian Threat

Almost every member of Aeschylus' audience would have derived some pleasure hearing the Messenger announce that Persia had been defeated. On the other hand, responses to the spectacle of the Messenger and the Chorus wallowing in misery over the news of the unmitigated disaster might have varied. The emotional tenor of the scene from the perspective of the Persians is clear. The wordless cries of both the Messenger and the Chorus (253, 257, 268, 274, 283) convey their extreme distress, and their movements and song would no doubt have strengthened this impression. The Chorus members are not unsympathetic in their misery. Their expression of regret that they lived long enough to see a disaster of this magnitude (263-5) may have humanized them in the eyes of some spectators, and their reference once more to Persian women who have been widowed may have also have elicited some sympathy. Yet faced with this display, an audience primarily composed of Athenians could be expected to feel a certain amount of *Schadenfreude*; the specific references to Athens, whom the Messenger and the Chorus hate for destroying the army and for being the ones who did the widowing of the Persian women (284-5, 286-89), may have been intended to please spectators, as they are likely to have done, and thus to counteract the sympathy they may otherwise have felt for the Persians. But whether spectators were inclined to take pleasure in the pain of their enemies or feel sympathy for them, the knowledge that Persia has not only been defeated, but also rendered powerless may have inclined them to view the Persians differently from this point on.

Judging from the Messenger's account, there can be no question that Persia suffered a crippling defeat. From his first words, spectators learn that the wealth of

Persia has been destroyed in one blow and that its youth of fighting age (Περσῶν ἄνθος) are gone (251-52). Throughout the rest of the exchange, the Messenger and the Chorus emphasize the enormity and finality of the defeat and the weakness of Persia. In this way, much of the awe and fear with which the parodos' catalogue of Persian leaders would have instilled spectators would be undone. One can detect an implicit before and after comparison: Avery observes that words such as "πᾶς and its compounds" and "words which denote multitude, number, many, much," which were used in the parodos to "magnify the might and power of the Persian empire" are here used to "emphasize the magnitude of the disaster" (1963: 174; 176).[201] The army's countless numbers no longer march against the Greeks, but lie washed up on the shores surrounding Salamis (272-3). For obvious reasons, the Chorus and the Messenger dwell not on the power of Asia, but its weakness: its many and motley missiles came against Zeus's land "in vain" (μάταν; 268-71), and their bows were not sufficient; the whole army was destroyed by the attacks of ships (278-9). The description of Persia's utter defeat and the suggestion that it no longer poses any threat to Greece is certainly somewhat exaggerated (cf. Avery 1963: 173),[202] but by dismissing the threat that was invoked vividly in the parodos, this scene could have had a cathartic effect upon many spectators that would dispose them to a more objective, and potentially more sympathetic, consideration of the Persian experience in the aftermath of their defeat, unburdened by fears of hearing the sack of Athens

[201] Avery also notes the use of the perfect tense, which "impress on his audience not only the totality of the Persians' commitment to the expedition against Greece but also the utter finality of the results." Assaël 1993: 19 observes that μέγας appears in the parodos but is notably absent here and in the rest of the play.
[202] The Messenger goes so far as to say that Athens is "unsacked" (348), a statement which reinforces the sense that Athens was not harmed, but one which might also have seemed odd to spectators. Both Broadhead 1960: 118 and Hall 1996: 135 suggest that spectators would have understood this to mean that the people, who are the true source of the city's power, were not harmed.

recounted or fears that the Persians will attempt to reassert their influence in Greece. The announcement of the defeat could have exorcized many in the audience of their anxiety.

III.2 A Catalogue of Persian Heroes

With its list of Persian names, the Messenger's catalogue of fallen Persian leaders, offered in answer to the Queen's "whom of the leaders will we mourn," echoes the parodos, but is also markedly different. It appears to meet the expectation of a more objective treatment of the Persians in the wake of the defeat of the Persians. Whereas the parodos presented the Persians as a threatening, alien force, devoid of positive qualities, the Messenger's account of the Persian leaders is both reverential and sympathetic.[203] In death, the Persians are allowed to be great. Tenagon was ἄριστος, "the best," of the ancient Bactrians, but is now beaten against Salamis by waves (306-7). Tharybis, once εὐειδής, "handsome," now lies δείλαιος, "wretched," having died an unfortunate death (οὐ μάλ' εὐτυχῶς) (324-5). Aromardos was ἐσθλός, "a good man," whose death will bring grief to Sardis (321-22). Syennesis was the bravest of the Persians, gave the most grief to enemies, and died heroically (εὐκλεῶς) (326-28).[204] The list also includes vignettes of two pathetic deaths: Dadakes appears to jump from his ship when struck by a

[203] Cf. Groeneboom 1960: 326-8, however, who suggests that the tone is one of condescension, that the praise of the Persians sounds like the words of a good sport praising an overmatched opponent.

[204] According to Broadhead 1960: xviii, "there is no suggestion that the Persians were not gallant and courageous fighters. On the contrary, it is a reasonable inference from the praise of Syenneisis (326-8) that there were many brave warriors who cause great havoc to their foes. Gagarin 1976: 32, is right when he says that "no minor Persian success is mentioned, whereas a relatively unimportant Athenian success at Psyttaleia is described in detail (447-71)," but may be going too far when he states that "[n]o moment of glory…is granted to any warrior on the Persian side." The encounters must be one-sided if Aeschylus hopes to maintain the impression that the Persian threat has been nullified. Yet, without challenging this notion, he appears to grant as much nobility to the Persians as possible. Barrett 1995 notes the variety of perspectives represented in the Messenger's account and suggests that it represents an attempt to "elide[ ] the Messenger from the scene," a strategy which contributes to the Messenger's authority. These may, however, simply be a side effect of the attempt to present a full and sympathetic account of the defeat.

spear (304-5), and Matallos' beard appears to change color when he falls into the sea (314-5).

This list is certainly open to a reading that nullifies the Persians' positive qualities and contributes to the glory of the Greek victory. The virtues attributed to the dead suggest that the Athenians did not simply defeat the rabble of the Persia. They killed the best and mightiest of the Empire who, as the list repeatedly reminds spectators, often had thousands of soldiers serving under them. Those in the audience who hated the Persians might also dismiss the positive qualities which the leaders demonstrated on the grounds that they are not an accurate representation of their greatness but rather the kind of thing mourning Persians such as the Chorus might be inclined to say about their fallen heroes. These spectators would have been unable to forget that the "enemies" whom men like Syennesis excelled at giving grief to were Greeks and Athenians. Yet the preponderance of positive qualities in the description of the Persians and the lack of qualities that Greeks might consider negative is striking, particularly in contrast to the treatment in the parodos.

Indications that Aeschylus is tapping into the heroic tradition in this scene suggest that he was aiming at something more than a simply ambivalent response to the fallen Persians. With its "short obituaries," which in the *Iliad* are intended to evoke pathos (Griffin 1980: 103),[205] the list could have reminded some spectators of Homeric catalogues of the dead (cf. Michelini 1982: 105 and Ebbott 2000: 84). An implicit allusion to Homer could have worked in multiple ways. Spectators trained by the epics to

[205] See Griffin 1976 and 1980 on the pathos of Homeric obituaries in the *Iliad*. Michelini 1982: 105 suggests that the audience of the *Iliad* would have been alienated by the extensive lists of the dead just as the audience of the *Persians* would be put off by this list.

respond sympathetically to catalogues of this nature might have responded in a similar way here. An allusion to Homer may also have been enough to incline them to view the Persians in terms of the heroic tradition as fallen heroes. The list of foreign enemies could have reminded some spectators of the *Iliad's* even-handed treatment of the foreign enemy and perhaps influenced their consideration of the Persians and their allies. Ebbott goes one step further in arguing that the form of the list resembles Athenian casualty lists. She argues that "[b]y applying an Athenian convention to the war dead of the Persians, this speech makes an implicit association between the war dead of both sides of the conflict" (2000: 94-5). Whether they view the dead Persians in terms of the Homeric tradition or make the connection between them and their own dead, the construction of the list asks spectators to view the Persians not as utterly foreign enemies, but as soldiers not unlike themselves, who in many cases died nobly in war, albeit for an ignoble cause. The list does not explicitly refer to the Greeks, neither those who died nor those who were victorious, and this may have prevented spectators from thinking overmuch of the opposition between these Persians and themselves. It may even have encouraged a level of identification.[206] The subsequent emphasis on Persia's total defeat and the Greeks unmitigated victory would have left no one for spectators to mourn and thus no barrier to feeling sympathy for the Persians.

[206] Cf., however, Goldhill 1988, who argues that the failure to name any Greeks represents "the subsumption of the individual into the collectivity of the *polis*…a basic factor in fifth-century Athenian democratic ideology" and suggests that, according to the *Persians*, the Greeks' victory was "because of the values of democratic *collectivity*, embodied in Athens, as opposed to barbarian tyranny."

III.3 Persians and Greeks at Salamis

The depiction of the Persians at Salamis is entirely at odds with the potentially positive depiction of them in the catalogue. It is no surprise that the Messenger's account contrasts the conduct that led the Greeks to victory and the conduct that brought about the Persian's downfall, but the Messenger repeatedly draws attention to the Persians' shortcomings and reverts to the stereotypical depiction with which the play began. This may be a function of spectators' presumed expectations of a recounting of the battle of Salamis. A somewhat surprising emphasis on the Persians' obedience in this context along with an emphasis on Xerxes' failures in leadership and the role of the gods in the defeat suggest, however, that the Persians were victims of Xerxes and the gods as much as the Greeks.

III.3.a The Greeks at Salamis

Aeschylus' spectators would need little help deciding whom to root for at Salamis, but the Messenger's account offers tangible proof of the Greeks' superiority on multiple levels. They show superior courage and discipline and answer decisively the Queen's question regarding their ability to fight without a master. Despite being significantly outnumbered, they hold their formation till daybreak and do not succumb to fear. When they strike, they sing the paean and rush into battle "with enthusiastic courage" (εὐψύχωι θράσει). Even in battle no leader emerges among them. The most authoritative figures who appear on the Greek side, and only indirectly, are boatswains.[207] But, when the trumpet sounds, they immediately (εὐθύς) begin rowing in unison (κώπης

[207] Broadhead 1960: 123 and Hall 1996: 138 suggest that the command at line 397 would be thought to come from a boatswain.

ῥοθιάδος ξυνεμβολῆι, 395-7), proceed in an orderly fashion (εὐτάκτως, 399; κόσμωι, 400), and act sensibly (οὐκ ἀφρασμόνως) when they surround the beleaguered Persian ships for the attack (417-8). According to the Messenger, the victory was made possible by the intervention of the "Athenian man," who convinces Xerxes that the Greeks will attempt to flee at night. This news points to the superiority of the Greeks planning and would be certain to please spectators.[208] Finally, the cry overheard by the Messenger for the Greeks to free their fatherland, their children, their wives, their temples, and the graves of their ancestors (402-5) would be particularly meaningful to Athenian democrats (Hall 1996: 138), for whom freedom was a watchword. But it also would have reminded spectators of what they fought for and what was at stake if they had been defeated. They were fighting to preserve their homes, their families, and their way of life. The Persians, in contrast, were fighting to enslave them and destroy their lands.

III.3.B THE PERSIANS AT SALAMIS

The conduct of the Persians at Salamis stands in direct contrast to that of the Greeks. The Persians simply do not stack up next to them. The Greeks attack bravely, while fear strikes the Persian fleet when they hear the Paean. The Persians can only answer the Greeks' traditional, unifying battle cry and rousing words of encouragement with a Περσίδος γλώσσης ῥοθος (406-7), an "uproar of the Persian tongue," the cries of a heterogeneous force made unintelligible by their lack of agreement. Whereas the Greeks display discipline throughout the battle, the Persians maintain order only prior to

[208] According to Herodotus, the plan was Themistocles (8.75), though he sent a servant to speak to the Persians. Critics cannot decide whether the mention of the plan is intended to praise Themistocles or if the failure to mention him is a slight.

the Greek attack. Despite the prominent role that leaders play in the Persian fleet (cf. 378, 383), Xerxes chief among them, chaos ensues once the battle begins. The Persian ships are crowded into a tight space to prevent the Greeks from escaping (see Hammond 1956: 41-5, Broadhead 1960: 327-29) so that, when the Greeks attack, the Persians crash into one another (413-16) and are forced to flee in disorder (ἀκόσμως) (422). As a result, most of the Persians die horrible deaths, destroyed along with their ships from the impact of both friendly and hostile ships, beaten by the Greeks with oars and wood from the wrecks of their own ships "like tuna or netted fish" (424-26), or left to drown in the sea during the night (426-28).

Despite its generally negative account of the Persian soldiers, however, the account of the battle of Salamis seems to exonerate them of some of the blame for their defeat. Something has gone terribly wrong on the Persians' side. They should have won; the audience is reminded that they outnumbered the Greeks more than three-to-one (337-42). Somehow they nevertheless managed to be defeated. Left to their own devices, spectators might have attributed the Persians' defeat to the superiority of the Greek troops or to the inherent inferiority of the Persians. But the Messenger's emphasis on the Persians' obedience to authority when he describes how they patrolled the seas to prevent the Greeks from escaping suggests that the failure may in fact have been one of leadership. The Persians follow Xerxes' orders exactly. They move in an orderly fashion (οὐκ ἀκόσμως), display a πείθαρχος φρήν (374), an "obedient mind," and πλέουσι δ' ὡς ἕκαστος ἦν τεταγμένος (381), "they sail, each as he was ordered."[209] Thus, when, as

[209] Bakewell 1998: 234-5 suggests that the Messenger's description of the Persians as "lords of their oars" and "masters of their equipment" (378-9) reveals the degree to which "Persia is wedded to hierarchy through and through."

a direct result of Xerxes' orders, the Persians find themselves sleep deprived, tightly configured in a too narrow space, and surrounded by a well-rested Athenian navy, spectators may well have concluded that Xerxes, and not the Persians, is responsible for their defeat. Hall argues that, with its emphasis on obedience and order, the passage is better understood in reference to the Greeks: "the delineation of the sailors in terms of orderly conduct, in conventional democratic language defining *willing* obedience to authority…is far more appropriate to the play's overall picture of the Greeks" (1996: 137).[210] But we have already seen that obedience is characteristic of the stereotypically hierarchical Persians, and it is difficult to reject the original attribution solely on these grounds. It appears, then, that the Persians' obedience to authority, and specifically to Xerxes, is the reason for their defeat and that the disorder that they display in battle is not an expression of their natural disposition, but rather a direct result of Xerxes' commands. The contrast between their initial discipline and subsequent disorder when the fighting begins would serve as an indictment of Xerxes' commands and, more broadly, of Persian governance, in which men like Xerxes are able to act with impunity (cf. Bakewell 1998: 233, 236). To the degree that this is the case, spectators would see the Persians as victims of Xerxes' rule rather than perpetrators of injustice and be more inclined to sympathize with them as a result (cf. Fisher 1993: 262).

[210] Hall argues that the οἱ δ' of line 374 marks a change of subject from the Persians to the Greeks. She argues that, in addition to being better suited to the play's depiction of the Greeks, the passage "picks up explicitly on the disorderly flight, with every man for himself, falsely predicted by the Greek (359-60), and contrasts it with the actual orderliness and mutual cooperation which ensued." Yet the orderliness not only reflects the influence of Persian hierarchy but also makes sense following as it does Xerxes' threat to behead anyone who allows the Greeks to escape. See Bakewell 1998 for an argument against Hall's attribution of these lines.

III.3.c Xerxes

The Messenger's account of Salamis and the events that led up to it portrays Xerxes as an unappealing figure, whom no Greek would admire. In the parodos he was a godlike figure who inspired terror in his enemies. Here, he is gullible, a poor strategist, a cruel leader, and a coward who brings about the death of his men before saving his own. Spectators may have excused some of his behavior as a result of divine intervention, on which more below, but the number and variety of negative traits attributed to him suggest that spectators are not intended even to pity the man. Already at the outset of the scene, the play distances Xerxes from his subjects who fall in battle when the Messenger reveals that he survived while his men died and by displaying the extreme relief which the Queen shows upon learning this (300-1), which some spectators may have construed as inappropriate given the death of so many of her subjects.[211] Xerxes is shown literally maintaining a distance from his troops when he watches the fighting from a high seaside hill (466-67). This would not only smack of cowardice to a Greek audience who expected their own generals to take part in the fighting, but also could have reinforced the impression that Xerxes imposes his will upon his subjects across a vast chasm of socially imposed supremacy.

The strict obedience that Xerxes demands of his men might have been, if not admirable, at least understandable if he had proved an able commander. Yet spectators quickly learn that Xerxes is unable to detect the deception of the Athenian man (355-62) and that he is optimistic about the Persians' prospects (372). Of his planning, they learn

[211] According to Michelini 1983: 92, "[t]he catalogue of Persian dead balances the news of Xerxes' survival." McClure 2006: 88 suggests that "[t[he inappropriateness of the king's return is underscored by the herald's statement that he himself did not expect to reach the shores of Asia alive…."

in a detailed account of Xerxes' orders to his men (361-72) that, under the false impression that the Greeks will attempt to escape, he orders his men into the tight formation that will lead to confusion and mutual destruction when the Greeks attack. His decree that all of his sailors will be deprived of their heads if the Greeks escape destruction (369-71), in addition to, ironically, proving true, illustrates the arbitrary and unjust nature of Xerxes and his rule.[212] It stands in contrast to the Greeks' professed ideal of freedom and, as a form of troop management, certainly would have been unthinkable for Greeks. It also illustrates the circumstances under which the Persians were forced to fight. Many spectators would have seen Xerxes' surviving unscathed despite his mishandling of the battle as a great injustice.

The account of the events at Psyttaleia (cf. Hdt. 8.76.1; 8.95) only strengthens the sense that the Persians have fallen victim not only to the Greeks, but to Xerxes and his inadequate leadership. According to the Messenger summary of the events at Psyttaleia: those "always first in loyalty to the king died shamefully by the least heroic death" (αὐτῶι τ' ἄνακτι πίστιν ἐν πρώτοις ἀεί αἰσχρῶς δυσκλεεστάτωι μόρωι, 443-44). Once again, Xerxes' misplaced confidence and failure to predict how the battle will turn out leads directly to the death of his men. Intending to make an easy kill of the Greeks, whom he falsely believes will wash up on the shore after they are defeated and their ships are wrecked, Xerxes stations his troops on the Psyttaleia in such a way that the Greeks are able to surround them,[213] pick them off with stones and arrows,[214] and finally butcher

[212] According to Clifton 1963: 114, the threat is an example of "a vein of savagery and brutality running through the descriptions of the Persians. See also Hall 1989: 79. Sommerstein 1996: 96, however, notes that the threat "was not carried out, and…in any case was no worse in principle than the death penalty which so great an Athenian as Miltiades had narrowly escaped for failing to capture Paros."
[213] Saïd 1993: 67 notes that the ground troops repeat the surrounding tactic of the triremes.

them like animals, literally dismembering them (κρεοκοποῦσι δυστήνων μέλη, 463). His reaction to these events, crying out and tearing his robes (465, 467), helps convey the sense that the Persians' deaths are in fact deserving of pity and may suggest, if only for a moment, that Xerxes is personally invested in the fate of these, his best men. Although some spectators may have felt a moment's pity for him in his utter defeat, his decision to flee as quickly as possible upon seeing the slaughter suggests a more selfish motive: in the death of his men he sees a threat to himself.

Other indications in addition to his questionable strategic maneuvers would have invited spectators' disapproval of Xerxes. The description of his plan to murder the shipwrecked Greeks reminds them of what he hoped to achieve and what might have happened if he had been successful. Spectators are likely to have taken pleasure in hearing the degree to which his expectations are disappointed. His order for the troops to flee in disarray (ἴησ' ἀκόσμωι ξὺν φυγῆι, 470)[215] is concrete evidence of his inability to properly command his men as well as of his cowardice. Finally, in her response to the news of the defeat at Psyttaleia, the Queen reminds spectators that for all of the men drafted, for all the resources expended upon it, and for all the damage it will inflict upon the Persian Empire, the expedition against Greece boils down to Xerxes' foolish personal desire to inflict vengeance upon the Athenians for Marathon.[216]

[214] Saïd 1993: 67 observes that this is the only time that the Greeks use bows, "the barbarian weapon par excellence," in the *Persians* and suggests that it symbolizes the complete reversal of fortune.
[215] Hall 1996: 143 notes that ἴησι can be taken transitively or intransitively.
[216] Her question, "were not the barbarians whom Marathon earlier destroyed enough?" (474-5) may have been thought to call into question the reasoning behind a second attempt to conquer the Athenians.

III.3.D THE GODS AT SALAMIS

Most spectators may have thought that Xerxes' shortcomings as a general were a sufficient explanation for the Persians' defeat, but a persistent strain suggesting that the gods themselves stand against Persia runs through the account of the battle. Whether the suggestion of divine involvement complements the account of Xerxes' failures or offers a competing explanation for the Persians' defeat remains to be seen. Though it seems clear that Xerxes is directly responsible for the defeat of the Persians, if spectators were to see him as a victim of the gods, they may be inclined to view him sympathetically.

The suggestion that the gods are behind Persia's defeat emerges early and often through the scene. When first she hears of the defeat, the Queen observes that ἀνάγκη πημονὰς βροτοῖς φέρειν θεῶν διδόντων (293-4), "it is necessary for mortals to bear calamities when it is the gods giving them." The Messenger offers more decisive statements on the involvement of the gods. He describes how a *daemon* destroyed the army, "weighing down the scales with an unequal fate" (345-6). Immediately before explaining how the Athenian man who deceives Xerxes, he tells the Queen how an avenger or evil *daemon* "initiated every evil" (354-5). Afterwards, he tells her that Xerxes "did not understand the deception of the Greek man nor the envy (φθόνος) of the gods" (360-1) and that he issued the orders that led to the Persians' defeat at Salamis because he did not know what the gods would bring (οὐ γὰρ τὸ μέλλον ἐκ θεῶν ἠπίστατο, 373). The interpretation of these utterances is complicated by the ambiguity of the term *daemon*. A *daemon* can operate internally as a stand-in for mental processes, suggesting an idea to mortals, giving them courage, or making them forget something. Yet a *daemon* can also operate externally, breaking a bowstring or making something

happen at an inopportune moment (see Wilford 1965: 221). Thus, spectators could interpret these instances as cases in which Xerxes or the army sabotage themselves and bring about their own troubles, but they could also conclude that Xerxes' inability to perceive the Athenian's deception is something more than a character flaw and that the gods themselves are working against him. The Queen does not clear up this ambiguity when, immediately before blaming Xerxes for undertaking a personal mission against Athens which ends in failure, she curses the "hateful *daemon*" who "deceived the minds of the Persians" (472-3).

Decisive evidence of the gods' opposition to the Persians comes when the Messenger narrates the events at the Strymon. When the few Persians who did not starve to death or die of thirst en route reach the river Strymon, they find that θεὸς χειμῶν' ἄωρον ὦρσε, "god sent an unseasonable storm," which froze the streams of the "sacred" Strymon (ἁγνοῦ Στρυμόνος, 495-97). Despite the Persians' fervent prayers and prostration to Earth and Ocean (498-9, 500), when they attempt to cross the river the next day, the sun with its θεοῦ ἀκτῖνες, "rays of god," melts the ice and drowns them. Their deaths are hastened because, as with the ships at Salamis, they fall upon one another and suffer a fate so wretched that the Messenger deems those men lucky who died quickly (506-7). The Persians' deaths are no less pitiable than those at Salamis and Psyttaleia, but this time it is clear that the gods made it happen. At the conclusion of the account, the Chorus can justly complain of how the "malevolent *daemon*" has come down heavily against the Persian race (515-6).

More important for spectators' view of Xerxes and the Persians than the gods' opposition to them, is the gods' motivation for doing so. At this stage in the

performance, the it remains somewhat unclear. Four possibilities come to mind, based on indications in the text and opinions about the Persians which spectators are likely to have held. First, noting the dual divine/human explanations of the events at Salamis, Sommerstein argues that "Aeschylean gods are not "supernatural". They *are* nature. They act not against, but by means of or in parallel with, the forces of the material world and the motives of human beings" (1996: 89). According to this view, the force of the divine should not be thought of as an independent entity. It is simply being used to ratify the Persians' defeat and the events that led up to it and to explain how something so unlikely could happen. This interpretation would not drastically change spectators' judgment of Xerxes from the description of Salamis, but rather affirm it. Second, other spectators may have concluded that the gods' opposition to Xerxes and Persia is not a sign of the gods' hatred of the Persians, but of their love of the Greeks. They would find support when the Messenger states that θεοὶ πὸλιν σώζουσι Παλλάδος θεᾶς (347), "the gods save the city of the goddess Pallas [Athena]," and that "god" gave glory to the Greeks at Psyttaleia (454-5). The idea might have pleased these spectators, but has very little to say about the nature of the Persians' expedition except, perhaps, insofar as suggests that it is wrongheaded to oppose a city that has the gods on its side.

Two other possible explanations for the gods' opposition to Xerxes could have had a more profound effect on spectators' opinion of him. The deception of Xerxes and the Messenger's reference to the φθόνος of the gods may have reminded some of the Chorus's observation that *no one* can escape the deception of the gods and of the Queen's

fear that great wealth leads to despair (cf. Cairns 1996: 21).[217] This would introduce the possibility that the expedition and the defeat of the Persians are punishments for Persia's great success rather than her misdeeds or the misdeeds of Xerxes. Viewed in this light, even a Greek audience might consider the gods' intervention a malevolent, if predictable, force, and Xerxes could come to be viewed by the most charitable spectators as a victim with whom they can identify. Yet how many spectators could see past his myriad faults, not least of which leading an army against Greece? Those who could not might be tempted to conclude that the gods are punishing Xerxes and the Persians because of some crime they have committed, whether it be the expedition itself (this might be a variation on the idea that the gods support Greece), the bridging of the Hellespont, the nature of Xerxes' rule over the Persians, or some as yet unspecified misdeed. Those who adopt this viewpoint would be likely to consider Xerxes' deception by the gods and the utter failure of his expedition entirely fitting. Yet those who placed the blame on Xerxes' shoulders would be inclined to sympathize to an even greater extent with the Persians, Xerxes' unwitting victims, suffering for crimes that are not their own. The depiction of Xerxes' behavior at Salamis would favor the idea that the gods' actions are working in parallel to his or that he is responsible for their opposition. But at this stage, athough spectators might favor one over the other, all of these views of the gods' motivations are sustainable based on the evidence, and many in the audience may simply have reserved judgment.

[217] The issue of the "envy of the gods" is complicated by the famous passage in the *Agamemnon* in which the Chorus states that there is an old saying that uncontrollable misery grows from great happiness, but that they themselves "apart from others" believe that only *hybris* begets *hybris*. The first, more common according to the Chorus sentiment, would suggest that the gods might punish the Persians simply for being so successful. The second sentiment might, if more common than the *Agamemnon* Chorus suggests, might lead the audience to look for transgressions on the part of the Persians and Xerxes. Broadhead 1960: 119 favors the latter interpretation.

III.4 THE QUEEN

The queen is presented in a relatively positive light during and after the Messenger's speech. She shows what appears to be sincere distress at the news of the Persians' defeat (445-6); her desire to learn the extent of the disaster drives the account. Although her initial relief at the news of Xerxes' safety may have seemed inappropriate, if understandable, in light of the deaths of so many of her subjects, her attribution of blame to Xerxes and acknowledgment that his plan backfired (473-77) may have prevented her from appearing in the eyes of the audience as a deluded mother concerned only about the welfare of her son. Her pious response to the defeat, praying and making offerings for the dead, her professed resignation to her circumstances, and modest aims for the future expressed at the end of the scene (522-26) are unthreatening and may have elicited some sympathy from spectators. The "maternal solicitude" she shows in asking the Chorus to console (παρηγορεῖτε) and escort Xerxes to the palace "so that he does not add some other evil to evils" (529-31) (Broadhead 1960: xxxvi)[218] does not reflect badly upon her so much as her son. Her request is fitting for a mother, but reflects a fall from grace for Xerxes, who began the play as a godlike leader of his army in a line of Persian gods, but now appears to be the fragile child of his mortal mother "in need of a maternal guidance" (McClure 2006: 84). This could have had a humanizing effect upon Xerxes, which could potentially invite a level of sympathy. But the need Atossa feels to coddle her son would also have reminded some spectators of her earlier assertion that he

[218] She asks the Chorus in case Xerxes arrives while she is making her offerings (529). The Queen will be absent when Xerxes finally appears onstage, but this does not occur in the next scene, as one viewing the play for the first time might expect from the placement of her request. On the function of her words in the narrative, see Dawe 1963: 27, 30, Garvie 1978: 68, and Thalmann 1980: 266, 277.

cannot be held accountable for his actions and suggest that he will not be punished for the destruction he inflicted upon Persia.

IV Revolution

The choral song that follows the Messenger's exit and precedes the Queen's next entrance suggests the breakdown of Persian royal authority. The Chorus offers the most unambiguously negative account of Xerxes thus far in the play, placing the blame firmly upon him and laying out the injustices that the Persian Empire visited upon its inhabitants. This development is likely to have inspired in spectators antipathy for Xerxes and a desire to see the Persian Empire fall. The entrance of the Queen, disturbed and without her finery, might have led spectators to conclude that the end is at at hand.

IV.1 The Chorus

In response to the news of the defeat, the Chorus sings of the Persian institutions that are now in danger. Kingly power has been destroyed (590), and, as a result, Persians will no longer be ruled by Xerxes, follow Persian laws (περσονομοῦνται), "pay tribute by despotic necessity" (δασμοφοροῦσν δεσποσύνοισιν ἀνάγκαις), have to prostrate themselves, or need to guard their tongues, which will be allowed to speak freely (584-97). Although the Chorus is ostensibly "express[ing] their fears of open rebellion now that the King's authority has been undermined" (Broadhead 1960: 144; but cf. Bordaux 1993: 78), by characterizing the Persian Empire as the antithesis of the Athenian ideals of

self-autonomy and freedom of speech,[219] the Chorus are effectively offering spectators an indictment of Xerxes' rule. This indictment casts the Greeks as liberators of the Persian people and may have played to spectators' vanities (so Groeneboom 1960: 17, Gagarin 1976: 32, and Bordaux 1993: 74),[220] but it also draws attention to the conditions under which subjects of the Persian Empire were forced to live. The insight would have been particularly meaningful in the case of cities formerly under Persian control,[221] but its implications could also be extended to the rest of the inhabitants in the Persian Empire. As a result, those who felt some sympathy for the fallen Persians could now sympathize with all of those who lived under Persian rule.

The themes of Xerxes' guilt and the suffering of his victims are pursued in the rest of the ode. The Chorus appears to demonstrate its newly won freedom of speech, offering the most pointed criticism of Xerxes yet: they state unequivocally, repeating Xerxes' name each time for emphasis, that Xerxes led the Persian army, destroyed them, and foolishly left everything to his navy (550-3). They proceed to describe those killed at sea as a result of Xerxes' decision (560-62), mourn those who were shipwrecked and drowned, now eaten by the fish (568-78), and recall the grieving of "houses deprived of

[219] Hall 1989: 89 suggests that the "three distinguishing features of life under Persian rule are formulated here from a clearly democratic perspective." See also Hall 1996: 149-50.

[220] It seems unlikely that the list would be seen by Athenians or other Greeks in the audience as an indictment of the Athenian Empire in 472, when the league was still sending expeditions against Persia, and Thasos had yet to revolt. At this stage Athenians and other league members would consider the "tribute" which other Greeks gave them in the form of ships and money willing contributions to the common cause of opposing the barbarians (cf. Thuc. 1.96.1). Hall 1996: 149 notes that "[t]he word δασμός is particularly associated in Greek sources with the taking of tribute by Persia (Xen. *Anab.* 1.1.8)," but observes that "[u]nder the democracy at Athens taxes were payable to the state, not to any individual" and argues that "[t]he diction implicitly contrasts the Athenian system with the Persian kings' exaction of tribute paid to themselves…"

[221] Groeneboom 1960: 17 and Gagarin 1976: 32 suggest that the Chorus refers here not to Persia in general but to the Greek islands and coastal cities formerly under Persian rule. Although these Greeks are later mentioned explicitly (879-86), there is no indication that they are only subject of the Chorus' discussion here.

men" and "childless parents" (579-83). Immediately before accusing Xerxes, the Chorus sings of women tearing off their veils, in pain, and yearning to see their lost husbands, losing themselves in insatiable Grief (537-45). Few members of Aeschylus' audience would have any love for the Persian Empire as an entity. Growing sympathy for the Persian people and growing antipathy for Xerxes would have prevented most of them from shedding any tears at the prospect of the dissolution of Persian royal power.

Yet despite the Chorus's denunciation of Xerxes, the sympathetic descriptions of the Persians who mourn for their dead, and the list of the injustices of Persian rule, even this ode is not entirely unambiguous. There is still room for those who believe that the gods are more responsible for the disaster than Xerxes. The song begins with an address to Zeus who, the Chorus say, destroyed Persia's army and brought grief to Susa and Ecbatana (532-36). In light of the clear attribution of blame to Xerxes, Zeus may be thought to have destroyed the army only in the sense that he allowed it to happen, but this formulation leaves open the possibility of divine involvement in the Chorus's conception of the events.

This ode also offers a potentially negative portrait of the Persian people. It may have threatened spectators' sympathy for them and suggested that the Empire's problems may run deeper than Xerxes's destructive influence. The Chorus describes the Persians who compose the army as "boastful" (μεγάλαυχοι, 533).[222] Excessive refinement is evident in the account of the Persian women, who are ἀβρόγοοι (541), "delicate in lamentation" and yearn for their ἐυνὰς ἁβροχίτωνας (543), "delicately covered beds,"

[222] Broadhead 1960: 144 notes the ambiguity of the term μεγάλαυχος. He points out that the Chorus of Persian elders would certainly intend to use the term in its positive sense, but this does not preclude the audience from grasping its less flattering connotations. Much of the Elders commentary on the Persian Empire must be read in this way, particularly the parodos.

and the χλιδανῆς ἥβης τέρψιν (544), the "delight of luxurious youth."[223] Their insatiable lamentation (545) may also have pointed to the excessive emotionality of stereotypical barbarians.[224] This initial emphasis on the strangeness of these mourners may have had an alienating effect on some spectators, though, for some, the effect may have been counteracted by subsequent accounts of Xerxes and other, less marked Persian mourners.

IV.2 THE QUEEN

The contrast between the Queen's initial entrance on a chariot dressed in an elaborate costume and her present entrance on foot without her royal garments offers visual corroboration of the breakdown of Persian royal power.[225] Sider notes that there is no mention of the prostration and elaborate addresses which marked her first entrance, perhaps another indication of her loss of status (1983: 191). Her dread in the wake of the defeat (603) suggests that she at least believes the threat to her person to be genuine. The Queen is suffering from auditory and visual hallucinations (604-6), and spectators might have supposed that the shock of the disaster has driven her insane. Yet those inclined to see the gods at work in Persia's downfall may have seen more than mere insanity in her claim that ἐν ὄμμασίν τ' ἀνταῖα φαίνεται θεῶν (604), "in my eyes appear the hostile oppositions of the gods." The Queen's behavior suggests that Xerxes' rule may be at an end, and many spectators might feel some delight in the prospect. Her request for the

[223] Bordaux 1993: 76 notes the parallel constructions in the parodos and the present ode.
[224] The distinction between Persians and the "hands of the Ionians" through which their ships are destroyed introduces a distinction between Xerxes' forces and Ionians, which may have been somewhat less straightforward in reality, but may contributed to the sense of "us" versus "them."
[225] See, e.g. Taplin 1977: 75-9, Thalmann 1980: 268-9, Sider 1983: 189, and Sommerstein 1996: 86.

Chorus to "call upon" (ἀνακαλεῖσθε) Darius (620-1) is not surprising under these circumstances, though spectators are unlikely to have expected to see him take the stage as a result.[226]

V Darius

The appearance of Darius may have forced spectators to reevaluate Xerxes' actions. New information regarding the nature and motivation of his actions make it clear that the expedition was absolutely wrong and wrongheaded and suggest that the defeat came about from a confluence of divine influence and human actions, including not only those of Xerxes, but also of the Persian army. The ample evidence of Darius' otherworldly power and authority, his ability to understand the workings of the gods, the disdain and disgust with which he views his sons actions, and his use of traditional Greek theology to explain the Persians' defeat are likely to have lent weight to his insights regarding what has happened in the eyes of a Greek audience.

V.1 Preparations for Darius' arrival

From very early on in the play, the figure of Darius looms over Xerxes, an able general and king and thus the antithesis of his son. Already in Atossa's dream, Darius stands by as a witness to Xerxes' failures, pitying his son (197-8). When the Chorus charges Xerxes with destroying Persia, they are immediately reminded of Darius, whom they call the "lord of the bow" and "beloved leader of Susa" who, at least in their eyes, brought no harm to his citizens (ἀβλαβής) (555-57), unlike Xerxes. In the ode that

[226] The fact that he is called a *daemon* (620) may, however, be taken as a hint that he is not simply another corpse.

precedes his arrival from the underworld, they describe Darius as a divine figure,[227] a "god of the Persians born in Susa" (643) and "a blessed King equal to a *daemon*" (634), who, as a "godlike counselor" (θεομήστωρ), "steers his army well" (654-5). As before, and again in implied contrast to Xerxes, the Chorus emphasize that Darius is a "beloved man" (648) and that he did not destroy his men (652-3; cf. ἄκακε, 671). For spectators, who were still unaware that Darius would take the stage, the Chorus's extravagant praise has the effect of belittling Xerxes, but also, in the moments before his appearance, builds a positive image of Darius unburdened by spectators' skepticism that any living man could live up to the introduction.

There may, however, be a disturbing undercurrent to the Chorus's preparations for Darius' arrival. The ceremony to raise the dead might have made some spectators uneasy (cf. Ogden 2001: 263-68). Like any good Greek, the Chorus address their prayers to the dead to Earth, Hermes, and to the Chthonic gods (629, 640-1), and, as Hall argues, "ghost-raising was by no means an unfamiliar procedure to the Greek audience" (1996: 152). But in the Greek tradition ghosts appear more often than they are actively summoned (cf. the ghosts of Patroclus and Clytemnestra). Even Odysseus at *Odyssey* 11, the most obvious case of ghost-raising in Greek literature, is already at the entrance to the Underworld when he does so. So, it is possible that a ceremony to raise the dead would seem odd or even unseemly to an audience of mostly Athenians. The Chorus's specific mention of their barbaric (βάρβαρα, 635) and "ill-sounding" (δύσθροα, 637) cries, no doubt reflected in the actual song which they sang, would have underlined the alien

[227] Hall 1996: 92 distinguishes between Darius' ambiguous divinity while alive and his "unequivocal" divinity in death, but the references to his mortality (632, 634) may suggest otherwise. Cf. Michelini 1982: 146, who argues that "[t]he play makes clear that Dareios' rank as a "Sousa-born god" does not make him super-human. Unlike Xerxes, the old king has never forgotten to observe the limits set for mortals."

aspect of the ceremony and would have ensured that, with regard to both the ceremony and Darius' divine or semi-divine status, Greeks "would not accept it in the sense of accepting this as a normal, comfortable, and ordered view of the boundary between human and divine" (Pelling 1997: 14 n.63). Whether the ceremony would strike spectators as fascinating or perverse, however, would likely depend on spectators' individual view of the Persians and perhaps necromancy. It is possible that the alien nature of the ceremony was intended to leave spectators unsure whether Darius' entrance would be grand or disturbing and thus to generate suspense.

V.2 The Appearance of Darius

Although his actual appearance may have come as a surprise, an attractive picture of Darius emerges over the course of the scene that would have lent him an air of authority and reliability in the eyes of a Greek audience, encourages spectators to forget their past encounter with his forces at Marathon, and invites spectators' allegiance to him.[228] His power is absolute, but conscientiously wielded. His authority in the Underworld, which is so great that he is able to leave and answer the Chorus's call (688-92), suggests that his claim to power is both legitimate and divinely ratified. The fear and hesitation that his presence inspires in the Chorus conveys to spectators the impact that his majesty and power should have on a mortal audience (694-6; 699-701).[229] But whereas the Chorus's response to the Queen's first entrance emphasizes their debasement

[228] According to Griffith 1998: 59, "this towering figure is conceived of a being virtually perfect, almost super-human—a source of authority, wisdom, power, mastery, and reassurance second to none on earth."
[229] Broadhead 1960: 175 ventures that the Chorus "display in his presence what amounts to a religious devotion, and what they say is couched not only in appropriate language, but in a from reminiscent of that in which the prayers and appeals of the religious devotee were expressed."

before her, here, their reaction allows Darius to demonstrate his magnanimity: he asks them to set aside their fear, albeit to no effect (698; 703-4), an act that suggests that, despite his absolute authority, he is no despot.[230] His extraordinary powers enhance the sense of his greatness. Darius understands the working of the gods and is able to see into the future.[231] He is the first figure in the play to explain the religious significance of the bridging of the Hellespont, and he is able to predict the destruction of the troops at Plataea. It is likely that his costume also conveyed the great wealth and vast resources that were, and perhaps continue to be, at his disposal.[232]

This picture of Darius would certainly inspire awe, and though it may have struck some as excessively alien, Darius' otherworldly nature may also have led some spectators to set aside, or at least forgive, his direct connection to Persia. The distancing of Darius from Persia would have been enhanced by his thoughts on Persia's defeat. Darius appears to look past his ties to Xerxes and offers an unvarnished account of the events that is not only sympathetic to a Greek perspective but also displays elements of Greek theology.[233] Darius' willingness to reproach Xerxes for his crimes and foolishness and to

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[230] One might, however, note his abiding interest in maintaining Persian luxury (751-2), on which see Clifton 1963: 113 and Pelling 1997: 14-15.

[231] See, however, Dawe 1963: 31 and Conacher 1974: 161, 161 n.3 on the limits of Darius' perception.

[232] The only evidence we have is the Chorus's reference to his κροκόβαπτος εὔμαρις and τιήρας φάλαρον, his "yellow-dyed slipper" and the "tip of his tiara" (660-62), but it is likely, as Griffin 1998: 59 suggests, that the King would have been "dressed (thanks to the special resources and licences of the Theatre) more sumptuously than any human being they had ever seen in their lives." Even so, the costume could be made to appear foreign and effeminate—Miller 1997: 204 and Hall 1996: 154 point out that the eunuch in Euripides' *Orestes* also wears εὐμάριδες (1370). Griffith 1998: 57-8 notes that other critics "think Dareios' appearance must have been experienced as grotesque and distancing," though he prefers to think that the King would have a much more positive effect on spectators. Given Darius' other attributes in the passage, it seems probable that whatever Darius wore, it was intended to convey his power and majesty but also, perhaps, an air of the alien that would make it more interesting for some spectators while leading others to maintain a sense of distance from Darius.

[233] Cf. Broadhead 1960: xxix, Pelling 1997: 15, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 6-7, 12, and Cairns 1996: 22. Pelling 1997: 15 observes that "there is a good deal in what he says which the audience can appropriate as their own."

call the Persians to account for the sacking of Athens would put him in line with the thinking of the majority of Aeschylus' spectators. This would also be the case when he envisions Xerxes and the Persians' downfall in terms of the cycle of *hybris* and *ate* (821-2), thinking that would "map closely on to natural Greek assumptions" (Pelling 1997: 15). Finally, Darius is likely to have simultaneously reassured and pleased spectators when he informs the Chorus that, even if it recovers, Persia will never successfully invade Greece (789-97). Taken together, these factors may have been enough to dismiss any remaining qualms about the unusual circumstances regarding Darius' appearance, to suggest that Darius is an objective and decisive source of information and insight with whom they may comfortably ally themselves, and discourage most spectators from considering that Darius is the only source in the play for many of the insights he offers and therefore questioning their validity (cf. Gagarin 1976: 47).

Darius invites antipathy for Xerxes as he invites allegiance to himself. He is a constant reminder of Xerxes' inadequacies (cf. Conacher 1974: 166). Darius' costume would stand in direct contrast to Atossa's clothing in this scene and to Xerxes' rags in the next, both of which serve as indications of the degree to which the Empire has fallen. His humane use of authority might have reminded spectators of Xerxes' threat to behead the leaders who failed him. His awareness of the workings of the gods and of the future draws attention to Xerxes' foolish and impious yoking of the Hellespont and may have reminded spectators of Xerxes' failure to perceive the deception of the gods and to envision how Salamis would turn out.

Darius is the antidote, so to speak, to Xerxes' poison, a figure who fills the void created by Xerxes' failed leadership. The scene can be understood to offer an argument

against Xerxes aimed at those who have oligarchic leanings and who would not immediately dismiss the idea of absolute rule. Darius' list of Persian kings illustrates that not all absolute rulers are intrinsically evil. Xerxes, however, is a different kind of animal, whose failures far outshine the worst of his predecessors: Darius repeatedly observes that no other Persian ruler accomplished as much suffering (785-6; cf. 759-64, 781). Thus, Xerxes' behavior cannot simply be explained away as a function of his being the king of Persia. Darius himself is evidence of a benevolent and judicious model of absolute rule. The mere fact of his existence serves as an indictment of his son. Xerxes is certainly a monster by democratic standards, but this scene suggests that he is not much better when judged by the standards of the Persian Empire.

V.3 How did it Come to This?

Competing or perhaps complementary explanations for the defeat abound.[234] Darius reveals the existence of an oracle that predicted the fall of the Persian Empire, Darius and the Queen point to the very human motives that led Xerxes to undertake the expedition, and Darius suggests that the Persians in the army have been rightly punished for the sacrileges they committed when they sacked of Athens. These revelations do nothing to exonerate Xerxes or the Persian army for their actions, and if spectators see these explanations working in conjunction with one another to bring about the defeat, they are likely to conclude that the punishment inflicted upon Xerxes and Persia for their actions was not only necessary, but fitting. Yet the various explanations have different

[234] Anderson 1972: 168 may be oversimplifying when he says that "it is undoubtedly left to the ghost of Darius to point to the chain of cause and effect which unequivocally establishes Xerxes' responsibility for the disaster."

implications with regard to spectators' sympathies. Those who give preference to one explanation over another, whether it be the will of the gods, Xerxes' impetuousness and impiety, or the Persians' sacrilege, are likely to find their sympathies and antipathies lining up in more complex ways.

V.3.A ENSLAVING THE GOD

When he learns how Xerxes managed to transport a land army to Athens, Darius clearly states that Xerxes' bridging of the Hellespont, the defining act of his expedition against Greece, was an insult to the gods. If correct, these actions would be more than enough to explain why the gods deceived Xerxes and brought about his destruction and the destruction of his empire, and spectators might well conclude from this account that Xerxes and Xerxes alone is responsible for bringing down the empire through his *hybris* and impiety (cf. Conacher 1974: 162). Initially, Darius and the Queen's references to the bridge are ambiguous. Darius cannot believe that he accomplished such a feat, and the Queen ventures that some *daemon* must have taken hold of his thought (γνώμης ξυνήψατο, 723-4).[235] The discussion takes an ominous turn, however, when Darius reveals the source of his surprise, suggesting that it must have been a great *daemon* indeed to make Xerxes so irrational (ὥστε μὴ φρονεῖν καλῶς) as to do such a thing (725).[236] The Queen agrees that it must have been a great *daemon* indeed, judging by how things turned out (726). When next Darius takes up the matter of the bridge, the accusations of impiety are unmistakable. Xerxes "attempted to hold the holy Hellespont,

[235] Jouanna 1993: 91 suggests that this comment is intended ironically.
[236] The movement of this passage from ambiguity to clear condemnation seems the best evidence that earlier references to the bridging of the Hellespont were not expected to have an entirely negative effect upon spectators.

god's Bosporus stream, with restraints like a slave" (745-6); and, "though a mortal, he foolishly thought that he would conquer all of the gods and especially Poseidon" (749-50). For Darius, these actions are evidence of a "sickness of the mind" (νόσος φρενῶν, 750), and it seems clear that both the bridge over the Hellespont and the expedition for which it was devised are unequivocally wrong. Xerxes attempted to enslave and conquer the gods just as he intended to enslave and conquer the Greeks. This would have driven home to spectators the enormity of his insult against the gods and make them not only feel that he deserves punishment for his actions, but also yearn to see it inflicted. It was not Xerxes' or the Empire's success that brought the gods down upon them, but rather a crime for which they justly sought retribution.

V.3.B An Oracle

Some spectators' distaste for Xerxes may, however, have been mitigated somewhat by the indications that the gods were actually behind the bridging of the Hellespont and the expedition. Before detailing Xerxes' crimes against the gods, Darius states that "Zeus hurled the fulfillment of prophecies (τελευτὴν θεσφάτων) against my son" (740), and reveals the existence of an oracle that appears, judging by Darius' surprise at how quickly it was fulfilled and the way in which it happened, to have foretold the downfall of the empire by an unspecified agent and at an unspecified time in Persia's future (739-41; cf. 800-1). Some spectators may have concluded that this oracle simply looked forward to the chain of events through which Xerxes would inevitably bring about the destruction of the Empire through his own actions. These spectators could have reconciled references to the gods' intervention in these affairs here and elsewhere by

positing "double motivation," wherein the intervention of a god or a *daemon* is viewed as simply an expression of Xerxes' own will, and Xerxes can be held fully accountable for what he has done (see above, section III.3.D).[237] They may have supposed that Darius holds Zeus responsible only in the sense that nothing can be done without Zeus's approval. Darius' observation that ὅταν σπεύδηι τις αὐτός, χὠ θεὸς συνάπτεται (742), "whenever someone hastens through his own actions, the god also lends assistance," would support this interpretation.

Yet Darius' reference to the god's role in fulfilling the oracle would have led some spectators to imagine a more active role for the gods in the affair, particularly given the tangible ways in which *daemones* have intervened thus far in the play. They might grant that Xerxes' impious decision to bridge the Hellespont and his plan to attack Greece goaded the gods into moving up their timetable for the destruction of Persia. They might even grant that Xerxes is almost entirely to blame for what happened. Yet they could nevertheless have focused on the level of contingency that is evident in the gods' plans.[238] If Xerxes is able to hasten the destruction of the Empire, was he in fact the real target of the gods' anger, or were the gods perhaps spurred on by deeper problems in Persia, of which Xerxes may have been a symptom rather than the cause? Was Xerxes, as ruler of the Empire, simply the most efficient instrument through which the gods might achieve its destruction? These considerations would have led some spectators to take into account the somewhat striking possibility that Xerxes is also, like his men, a victim

[237] Lesky 1966: 84 speaks of the "characteristically Aeschylean union of fatal necessity and personal will." Gagarin 1976: 49-50 suggests that the "*Persae* presents a convergence of human and divine motivation very similar to what we have seen in Homer."

[238] The competition between the ideas that the events were foreordained and that Xerxes simultaneously hastened them on may simply reflect two different folk explanations for the event that were not meant to be examined too closely.

of sorts. Spectators with deeply-held beliefs about the gods,[239] who could imagine themselves being tempted or actively manipulated by them or who simply recognized that they are constantly affected by forces outside their own control, might even have found themselves sympathizing to some extent with Xerxes' position, if not the man himself.

V.3.c Personal Reasons

Darius and Atossa present a picture of Xerxes and his motivations in this scene that is more personal than spectators have thus far seen and that suggests yet another explanation for the disastrous events that led to the defeat of the Persians. The account belittles Xerxes and would, if anything, lower spectators' opinion of Xerxes, but it may at the same time have invited a level of sympathy for him. In the parodos, Xerxes is a Persian Ares, a terrible, enigmatic, godlike figure leading a terrifying army against the Greeks. In the Messenger scene, his undeniable shortcomings as a leader become apparent, but they are the flaws of an imposing ruler willing to stake the lives of his men on his decisions. In Darius and the Queen's interaction, Xerxes emerges as an impetuous, flawed youth whose monumental errors result from a combination of naiveté and thoughtlessness rather than a desire to overcome the gods and conquer the world.[240]

Xerxes' age is proffered in this scene as an explanation for his actions. The parodos includes a passing reference to Xerxes' youth (13); here Darius states that Xerxes brought about the destruction of the Persians "unknowingly" because of "youthful

[239] This position might also appeal to those who recognized the interplay between gods and humans as an integral part of the genre of tragedy.

[240] One feels the shift in the presentation of Xerxes with the changing use of the word θούριος. Initially, it suggests that Xerxes rushes into battle (74), then that he rushes toward his and Persia's destruction (718), and finally it suggests the kind of rushing that is characteristic of a rash, inexperienced young man (754). Broadhead 1960: xxviii offers "impetuous" or "foolhardy."

rashness" (νέον θράσος, 744). Later, in attempt to account for Xerxes' monumental failures, he says that Ξέρξης δ' ἐμὸς παῖς νέος ἐὼν νέα φρονεῖ (782), "being a young man, my son Xerxes thinks young thoughts." He goes on to complain that Xerxes did not heed his orders (783). More striking than Xerxes' apparent disobedience to his father for most Greek spectators would be the fact that the King of Persia and master of all his subjects is himself be subject to the will of another, even if it his father. The Queen offers a more detailed account of Xerxes' position that highlights his immaturity and susceptibility to outside influence. She tells Darius that Xerxes was taught to think this way by spending time with "evil men" who suggested that he was not living up to the example set by Darius' courage in battle and empire-building through warfare. It was because of these men that Xerxes devised the bridge and the expedition against Greece (753-58).[241] The spectacle of his mother and father on stage discussing what has become of him and referring to him repeatedly as their child is likely to have strengthened the impression of Xerxes as an inexperienced, foolhardy young man (McClure 2006: 83-84). He is all but reduced to a helpless child when Darius tells the queen to clothe and pacify him because she is the only one to whom Xerxes will be willing to listen (837-8). The sense of Xerxes as divine ruler above the fray recedes further into the background when Darius cannot even be sure which of his sons led the expedition against Greece (717).[242]

The most instructive question with regard to the emphasis on Xerxes' youth and humanity may be: why now? This picture of him certainly reduces him in stature and

[241] McClure 2006: 89 suggests that spectators may have concluded that there is some truth to the "evil Persians'" accusation of cowardice.
[242] This may simply be a leading question in the stichomythia that allows the Queen to name Xerxes such that one should not put too much interpretative weight upon it, though Aeschylus' lines in stichomythia tend to be more to the point than Euripides', for instance.

strips away whatever dignity remained to him. It may have led spectators to judge him all the more harshly because he is an impetuous youth. It could also belittle the Empire, suggesting that its absolute ruler is little more than an impertinent youth who reached the highest position in the Empire not through divine will or ability, but through an accident of parentage and birth order, who is not a god, but a man born of two parents who are now very disappointed in him. This picture may have appealed to spectators who passionately hatred the Persian Empire and everything for which it stood. But if the only purpose for revealing Xerxes' youthful rashness is to portray him in a negative light, why not do so earlier? The depiction of Xerxes at Salamis is hardly positive. Why not mention his youth and rashness there, where these qualities would have offered an explanation of his many foolish and misguided decisions?

The revelation that Xerxes was only a young man when he led the invasion and brought about the destruction of his Empire marks a new direction in the depiction of him that may be aimed at painting Xerxes in a somewhat less negative light.[243] Granted, for some audience members, no amount of insight into Xerxes' background could possibly absolve him of his crimes against Athens and Greece. And, if Xerxes were still perceived as a threat to Greece, distaste for Xerxes might have been the prevailing feeling among the audience. Yet with that threat removed and the new information regarding his youth, some spectators might have given more consideration to Xerxes' case. Without entirely removing the blame for his actions, the emphasis on Xerxes' age, rashness, and impressionable nature could have reinforced the idea that he is a victim, whether of his upbringing, of the expectations placed upon him by his parents, of his advisors, or of the

[243] See, however, Hall 1996: 108, who suggests that Xerxes would have been "around forty years of age" at the time of the invasion.

gods. Dodds, speaking in reference to Pentheus' youth in the *Bacchae*, notes that "the Greeks were very susceptible to the pathos inherent in the rashness of inexperienced youth" (1960: 197). Spectators might have felt some compunction about placing the blame for the destruction of Persia on the shoulders of a young man who is, as Darius suggests, simply acting as one would expect a young man to act.[244] After all, the destruction of an empire is a high price to pay for the foibles of youth. Some spectators would, then, have moved one step closer to blaming the gods for taking advantage of Xerxes' weaknesses and concluding that the gods were more interested in destroying Persia than Xerxes; they would have considered the role that the evil Persians played in the events that came to pass; or they would have seen in Persia's willingness to allow a man like Xerxes to reach such a position of influence and power a condemnation of the Persian system of governance and of Persia as a whole.

Whether the knowledge of Xerxes' immaturity would lead spectators to actively sympathize with him is another question. On the one hand, spectators could have felt pity for Xerxes because he is a young man out of his depth. On the other hand, the emphasis on Xerxes' rashness and susceptibility to the will of others could have impeded the sympathy of spectators who would otherwise have identified with Xerxes as a victim of the gods; Darius and the Queen reveal that Xerxes is a not a good man brought low by the gods, but rather a hopelessly flawed man who appears to be responsible for everything that has befallen Persia. Most spectators would hesitate to see themselves in him. Yet some spectators, particularly those from aristocratic backgrounds, could have

[244] It is difficult to say how spectators' age would have affected their opinion of Xerxes. While some older viewers would undoubtedly look with disdain upon a rash youth who leads his empire to ruin, others would have been more forgiving than their younger counterparts, who could have held Xerxes to a higher standard.

seen in the particular "privileges" and "difficulties" attached to Xerxes' position a reflection of their own (Griffith 1998: 45). They may have sympathized with Xerxes, seeing in his fate a lesson with personal relevance to their own.

V.3.D THE *HYBRIS* OF THE PERSIANS

When, in his closing words, Darius reveals that all of the Persians whom Xerxes left behind in Greece will be destroyed at Plataea and elsewhere, he suggests that these men are themselves responsible for their own suffering. This marks a break from the account of Salamis, in which the Persian dead were presented as the unwitting victims of Xerxes and the gods. Darius describes how the Persians destroyed Greek altars and shrines, burned their temples, and stole images of their gods (809-12). He makes it clear that their deaths come as a direct result of these actions, stating that their suffering is ὕβρεως ἄποινα κἀθεων φρονημάτων (808), "punishment for *hybris* and for ungodly thinking" and observing that κακῶς δράσαντες οὐκ ἐλάσσονα πάσχουσι (813-4), "they have acted evilly and suffer no less." Darius suggests that there is a lesson to be gained from this. For generations, the corpses of the Persians will show humanity that mortals must not be immoderate in their thinking (ὑπέρφευ φρονεῖν) (818-20). Their suffering is evidence for Darius that "*hybris*, when it blooms, bears *Ate* as its fruit, from which it reaps a much-lamented harvest" (821-2). He bids the Chorus to look to the punishments of these men, remember Greece and Athens, and "let no one despise his present fate (τὸν παρὸντα δαίμονα) because he has fallen in love with the things of others and wastes great prosperity" (823-26). Zeus, he tells them, is a κολαστὴς τῶν ὑπερκόμπων ἄγαν

φρονημάτων, "a punisher of excessively over-boastful thoughts," and an εὔθυνος βαρύς, a "heavy judge" (827-8).

This passage may have forced some spectators to rethink their opinion of the Persians, as Darius appears to hold the Persians in some sense responsible for their own destruction. Xerxes may have foolishly conceived the expedition and even insulted the gods, but the Persians who sacked Athens have also done their part. They are no innocent victims, and in light of what the audience has learned of Xerxes in this scene, spectators may even consider them more responsible for what has happened: whereas Xerxes' actions may be excused, or at least explained, by his youth and inexperience and perhaps even by the influence of the gods, the Persians are given no excuses and spectators no explanations for what they have done. Spectators may also have been struck by the fact that while Xerxes' actions appear to fit on a number of different levels the definition of *hybris* as "the deliberate infliction of shame and dishonour" upon humans or the gods (Fisher 1992: 493),[245] the Persians' actions are the first of the play to warrant an explicit accusation of *hybris* (cf. Gagarin 1976: 47-8, Michelini 1982: 121; Fisher 1992: 260, Sommerstein 1996: 96). This may have given spectators the impression that the Persians are somehow worse than Xerxes.

Whether Darius' account of the Persians in this passage is intended to damn all of the inhabitants of the Persian Empire in the eyes of the audience is not clear. Darius' accusations are targeted against only those who took part in the destruction of Athens. It is possible that they were intended to go no further. Signs of the Persians' incursion

[245] See also Cairns 1996: *passim* and Hall 1996: 163.

would still be in evidence in 472,[246] and the passage may have been aimed at reassuring Athenian spectators that the particular men who dared destroy their temples and monuments were punished for their actions (Winnington-Ingram 1983: 12). This may have been enough for some spectators who would have felt no reason to extend the blame to those who did not take part, whether they were Persian soldiers, soldiers fighting for the Persian Empire, or other members of the Persian Empire. But others may have seen in the account an indication, hinted at earlier by the reference to evil Persians influencing Xerxes, that there are bad seeds in Persia who may share the responsibility for the Empire's destruction and who may in reality be the real source of the gods' anger. Those spectators who hated the Empire may even have taken this isolated incident as more than ample evidence to damn all Persians.

Yet despite the emphasis on the Persians' crimes, there are indications in the passage that Xerxes is also guilty in this affair. Those unswayed by considerations of Xerxes' age and the intervention of the gods would be likely to conclude that Xerxes is just as, if not more, guilty for these crimes as his men in so far as he was commanding the troops who desecrated Athens;[247] these actions could hardly be carried out without his approval, and the Persians may even have been acting under his express commands (cf. Broadhead 1960: xxviii-xxix, Fisher 1992: 260 n.72). These spectators would also have noted that much of what Darius says of the Persians also applies to Xerxes. Spectators would have immediately thought of Xerxes when Darius speaks of "thinking big," *hybris*,

[246] Hall 1996: 163-4 notes that, according to Lycurgus (*In Leocr.* 81) and Diodorus (11.29.3), "the Greeks swore an oath before the battle of Plataea not to rebuild the monuments the Persians burned down, but to leave them in their ruined state as a reminder of the barbarians' impiety."

[247] Herodotus actually describes two sackings of Athens, once under Xerxes (8.51-55), and once under Mardonius (9.3.2-9.4), intended to please Xerxes but not under his explicit orders. It is not clear that Athenians would have been aware of two different occasions in 472 or that it would have mattered much if they were.

and *ate* (Winnington-Ingram 1983: 12, Fisher 1992: 260, 260 n. 72). Darius' warning not to waste great prosperity by grasping at others' things certainly applies as much to Xerxes as it does the Persians who stole statues sacred to the Greeks (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 12). The reference to Zeus as an εὔθυνος (828), an "examiner," may be seen as a direct reference back to the Queen's claim that Xerxes is not ὑπεύθυνος (213), "liable to give his account to an examiner," thereby suggesting that, in the end, Xerxes will in fact be held accountable for his actions, by Zeus if not by his subjects (cf. Thalmann 1980: 271, Hall 1996: 165). Finally, at the end of the passage, Darius tells the Chorus that, in light of everything he has said regarding *hybris* and *ate* and mortals thinking beyond their station (πρὸς ταῦτ'), they should admonish Xerxes λῆξαι θεοβλαβοῦνθ' ὑπερκόμπωι θράσει (831), "to cease harming the gods with over-boastful arrogance." Whether or not Darius has Xerxes in mind from the start, these lines strongly imply that Darius considers Xerxes guilty of the same crimes for which he holds the Persians responsible in this section. At the same time, for those who harbored sympathetic feelings toward Xerxes, this piece of advice could suggest that he is capable of redemption.

V.4 The End of the Persians

On the one hand, Darius' insistence that the Persians will never again threaten Greece regardless of whether or not they are able to rebuild their empire (789-97), a fact which remains in doubt at this stage in the play, offers a satisfying conclusion to the account of their defeat at the hands of the Greeks. Many spectators might have concluded with Hall that, on the basis of Darius' scene, the Persians' defeat is "multiply over-determined" (1996: 15) and left it at that. Persia's fall was preordained, and no tears

need be shed over the Persians who died at Salamis and Plataea. Neither Xerxes nor any of the Persians were entirely innocent, and all of the guilty parties have been punished, though spectators might not have minded further evidence that Xerxes will indeed suffer for what he did. And yet, at the end of the *Persians*, the last and most decisive removal of the Persian threat would also have disposed some spectators to divest themselves of their personal enmity toward the Persians and their allies and explore more fully who, if anyone, is to blame for Persia's defeat and consider what will happen to the empire. This more objective stance toward the Persians may even have led these spectators, bolstered by the scene's personal insights into Xerxes' life and the introduction of mitigating factors, to continue to adopt a more sympathetic view of Persia's disgraced leader.

VI THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

On its surface, the Choral ode that follows Darius' departure and immediately precedes Xerxes' appearance on stage reaffirms the earlier picture of Darius. Some spectators may have experienced it in this way. As in the previous ode and in the previous scene, the Chorus idealizes Darius as the antithesis of his son, a great king and successful military leader. Darius is a πανταρκὴς ἀκάκας ἄμαχος βασιλεὺς, an "all-ruling, blameless, invincible king," who is once again "godlike" (855-7). The Chorus recall fondly the time when, under his rule, they had law and order in the city, acquitted themselves admirably as soldiers, and returned home safely after successful campaigns (858-63). They go on to illustrate Darius' military achievements, offering a victory list of the many cities and territories he conquered and ruled "without crossing the Halys River

nor rushing from his hearth (864-6).[248] The list of cities captured by Darius includes a number of cities that had not only been freed from Persian rule by the time of the *Persians*' performance, but had also, in many cases, become members of the Delian league (Gagarin 1976: 35-6, Hall 1996: 166, Sommerstein 1996: 94). This list certainly offers more tangible evidence of Xerxes' failures (Griffith 1998: 60) and may have been intended to delight Athenian spectators who took part in the recovery of those cities (Groeneboom 1960: 175, Hall 1996: 166).[249]

Yet while the Chorus attempt to downplay Darius' failures here and elsewhere (cf. Broadhead 1960: xvii, Sommerstein 1996: 93-4, Griffith 1998: 60), spectators may not have been so understanding. Three aspects of the ode suggest that, contrary to the impression with which the playwright is likely to have left spectators in the previous scene, the reality of Darius' rule may run counter to Greek ideals. Darius and the Chorus have emphasized Darius' military prowess as compared to that of his son's, but spectators might have rethought these claims when they learn that Darius did not actually take part in many of these engagements, not as a general nor in any other capacity, choosing instead to remain in the safety of his own territory.[250] Xerxes at least accompanied his army.[251] In the second place, the list of Greek cities in Darius' victory list and the

[248] Hall 1996 takes the comments regarding crossing the Halys to apply only to the conquest of the Thracian territories which immediately follow it.
[249] Gagarin 1976: 36 suggests that the list may also have been intended to engender "a feeling of support for Athens' current foreign policy, which was based on a strong naval federation of predominantly Ionian states."
[250] Hall 1996: 167 concludes that "a differentiation between Persian and Greek ideals of leadership is almost certainly intended." Sidgwick 1903: 51 believes the allusion to Darius' "vicarious invasions" would be considered "a sneer to Athenian ears." Groeneboom 1960: 178 and Meier 1993: 68 suggests that Darius did in fact cross the Halys, and that "the chorus is speaking of other enterprises here, which he delegated to his minor generals." It is unclear, however, how many spectators would be know in 472 what campaigns Darius took part in.
[251] De Romilly 1974: 93 suggests that this may be evidence of his impudence.

reference to Ionia might have reminded spectators that it was not Xerxes, but his predecessors, the two shining examples of Persian rule, Cyrus and Darius, who subjugated these cities, one originally (cf. 770-1), one in the Ionian revolt (Rosenbloom 2006: 117), and subjected them to absolute rule. And, finally, lest spectators idealize the lot of Greeks under Darius' rule, the list of conquered cities and governed territories and the claims that Darius was ἀκάκας and ἄμαχος would have reminded the majority of Aeschylus' spectators of a glaring counter-example in his failure to capture Athens (Sommerstein 1996: 93). The Chorus may not have referred directly to this or any other of Darius' failures, but it is hard to imagine that the memory of Marathon, already alluded to in the play (244), did not loom large in any Greeks' view of Darius.

Some spectators may have passed over these complications along with the Chorus, but those who discover a lack of bravery and a penchant for crimes against the Greeks in Darius' record would inevitably change how they look at Darius. The ode might also change how they view the Chorus and Xerxes. There is little question that these developments would threaten any allegiance to Darius engendered in the previous scene. The possibility of a just and benevolent Persian Empire, which Darius embodied in the previous scene, would be in danger. The fact that the Chorus fails to recognize this, praising Darius for his worst lapses in judgment from a Greek perspective, may also have threatened any allegiance spectators felt to them. On the other hand, although it is hard to say that this ode would lead spectators to sympathize with Xerxes, it might reduce some of the antipathy they feel for him. With Darius, his most damning accuser, chief competition, and the impossible standard by which his failings have been judged, taken down a notch, and in light of a developing pattern of crimes against the Greeks and

resulting failures for the Persian Empire, Xerxes' actions may have become more understandable to spectators. He did what Persian Kings did before him, though in his case, the combination of his youth and inexperience and the hostility of the gods brought about a different result. In this regard, it is worth noting that, despite their reminiscences about better days, the Chorus does not blame or even mention Xerxes in this ode. In the conclusion of their song, they seem to blame their defeats on land and sea upon the gods: νῦν δ' οὐκ ἀμφιλόγως θεότρεπτα τάδ' αὖ φέρομεν πολέμοισι δμαθέντες μεγάλως πλαγαῖσι ποντίαισιν (904-9), "now there can be no doubt that we are suffering divine reversals in battle, having been conquered greatly by blows from the sea."[252] Taken in combination, the downgrading of Darius, the attempt to place Xerxes' defeat in context, the attempt to remove sympathy from the Chorus, who argue with Xerxes at the beginning of the next scene, and the emphasis on the gods' role in the defeat suggest that the playwright may be trying to engender sympathy for Xerxes in the moments before his entrance. Whether most spectators would oblige is another question.

VII Xerxes' Reckoning and the Future of the Persian Empire

The conclusion of the *Persians* presents the spectacle of Xerxes and the Chorus of elders not just mourning the deaths of so many men and the disaster that has befallen the Empire, but screaming and tearing at their clothes and bodies. Spectators' responses to this scene are likely to be in keeping with their response to the play thus far. What would they be? Are spectators intended to take pleasure in their greatest enemy's anguish, as Xerxes fears (1034) (Sidgwick 1902: xii, Groeneboom 1960: 17)? Will they feel

[252] Those listening closely may have observed that, though it is implied that the defeat at sea also resulted from a divine reversal, the Chorus does not say so explicitly.

sympathy for the Persians and for Xerxes as a tragic figure (Broadhead 1960: xxiii, Pelling 1997: 16, Sommerstein 1996, 96)? Will they be impressed by the power of the display (Broadhead 1960: xxiii, Thalmann 1980: 269, McCall 1986: 46), or will they consider it over-the-top (Adams 1952 :41)? Pelling is certainly right when he says that "[t]his surely is a case where we should not think of the audience responding monolithically" (1997: 17). Individual spectators may even have felt a combination of these responses over the course of the scene (Griffith 1998: 52). There can be no doubting that, in a scene of this nature, the performance style that the actors playing Xerxes and the Chorus adopt could significantly influence spectators. But it is worth looking more closely at the textual indications that might have led to these divergent responses.

VII.1 Exotic Ululations

Hall has argued that the sight of Xerxes and the male Chorus's lamenting in a way that Athenians generally associate with women would emphasize both the barbaric nature of the participants and their feminization and, thus, have an alienating effect upon Aeschylus' spectators (1989: 83-84; cf. Sommerstein 1996: 95). Athenians may generally have associated lamentation with women (Alexiou 1974: 14, Foley 2001: 22, Hall 1996: 169, McClure 1999: 40-1), but male participation in lamentation are by no means unexampled in Greek tragedy (Suter 2008: 171-2)[253] or in the iconography of

[253] Griffith 1998: 50 offers Orestes' lament in the *Choephori* (306-478) as perhaps the most salient example. Foley 2001: 29 points out that it may make a difference that Orestes is supposed to be a young man. See Broadhead 1960: 310-317 for the way in which the final scene of the *Persians* conforms to the pattern of *threnoi* in other tragedies.

archaic Greece (Ahlberg 1971, Shapiro 1989). The high pitch screams (1058)[254] and self-laceration (1060) for which Xerxes calls may, however, have seemed strangely feminine for a group of men and distinguished this performance from more familiar examples of male lamentation.[255] The fact that extreme displays such as these would have been outlawed even for women in Athens at the time of the *Persians*' performance (Foley 2001: 29, Hall 1996: 169) may have made the display even more striking.[256]

On the other hand, the example of Priam at *Iliad* 24.159-65 suggests this kind of extreme display, even attributed to a barbarian, could still have a powerful emotional effect,[257] and there is no question that the loss of so many men and the destruction of the empire calls for an extreme response (cf. Sidgwick 1902: xii). Griffith may be right that Xerxes and the Chorus's display "would, I think, repel and attract the various elements of the Athenian audience in equal measure" (1998: 52). The most important question may be whether spectators saw Xerxes and the Chorus's behavior, with Hall, as an overreaction characteristic of barbarians, or if they saw it as a sincere, albeit strange, expression of extreme grief. Spectators in the former camp may have found the performance disgusting or even comical. For spectators who adopted the latter position, however, seeing Xerxes and the Chorus grieving in ways that are traditionally considered

[254] McClure 1999: 42-44 argues that the "high-pitched, piercing wail" is attributed specifically to women in epic and in tragedy.
[255] See Ahlberg 1971, Shapiro 1989: 635-6, and Suter 2008: 170 for an account of (what little we know of) the traditional roles of men in ritual mourning.
[256] See Shapiro 1989 for an account of the ways in which Athenian mourning practices changed around the time of the Persian wars based on an examination of Athenian art.
[257] Cf. Rosenbloom 2006: 125, who also mentions the example of Peleus in the *Andromache*, who "exhorts himself to tear his hair and to beat his head in lament for his grandson Neoptolemos (1209-11).

feminine and unmanly would have contributed to the sense that they are utterly abject, unable any longer to keep up appearances.[258]

VII.2 Persia in Shambles

Xerxes' entrance, like his mother's before him, offers a visual indication of Persia's undoing. Atossa has already drawn attention to the importance of the clothes in which Xerxes appears before his people when she says that in spite of everything Persia has suffered, it is the news of the dishonor of his clothing (ἀτιμίαν ἐσθημάτων) that causes her the most pain (846-48). Thus, spectators already have a sense of how significant it would be for Xerxes to face his subjects with his clothing in disarray.[259] Seeing Xerxes in rags, stripped of the symbols of royal and military authority (Avery 1964: 179, Thalmann 1980: 268-70, Schenker 1994: 291), could not help but remind spectators of Darius' luxurious outfit and would speak volumes about what has happened to the Persian Empire under Xerxes' watch. Xerxes himself draws the connection between his appearance and the state of the empire when he points to his empty quiver to convey that Persia's fighting force is no more (1014-24). The Chorus's complimentary, but relatively unadorned lists of dead Persians, including the φίλων ὄχλος, the "horde of friends," and the faithful Eye, μυρία μυρία πεμπαστής, "counter of tens and tens of thousands" (cf. ταρφὺς τις μυριὰς ἀνδρῶν, 926-7, μυρίοταγον, 993), reminds spectators of the reality behind the symbolism. The state of affairs is brought home when

[258] Cf. Pelling 1997: 14, and 16, where he suggests that their "agonized suffering" may "transcend national limits."

[259] The Queen's concern for Xerxes' clothing is generally thought to reveal the symbolic importance of the King's dress. Cf. Broadhead 1960: xx-xxi, Garvie 1978: 69, Conacher 1974: 165-6, Meier 1993: 71, Schenker 1994: 288, McClure 2006: 79, 92, 94; see also Hall 1996: 7. Thalmann 1980: 267 suggests that the Queen's concern heightens suspense regarding how Xerxes will appear.

the Chorus laments the loss not only of the army and the men of Persia, but also of the "great honor of the Persian Empire" (918-20).

VII.3 Who's to Blame?

The conclusion of the *Persians* is not just a set piece that illustrates how far Xerxes and Persia have sunk. With the appearance of Xerxes on stage, spectators may have expected to hear what happened to the Persians at Salamis from the man who commanded the troops. And the scene addresses, if not resolves, the crucial question that has already been touched upon without a decisive answer: who is to blame for what has happened to Persia? The final scene leaves the question open, or at least accommodates more than one viewpoint. Xerxes and the Chorus's exchange emphasizes the role of the gods in Persia's defeat but supports a reading in which Xerxes has worked in conjunction with the gods, and in which Xerxes is ultimately responsible.

On the surface, the attribution of blame in the final scene seems straightforward. The Chorus blames both the Gods and Xerxes. Xerxes blames the gods, but recognizes that he had a part in what happened. Xerxes clearly believes that the gods intervened, and did so to his detriment. He laments "how savagely the *daemon* came down on the Persian race (911-2) and how this *daemon* "has turned on him" (μετάτροπος ἐπ' ἐμοί). He complains that an Ἰάων Ἄρης, an "Ionian Ares," robbed the Persians and gave strength to their enemies (950-1). The Chorus likewise speaks of the dead Persians "whom the *daemon* has now cut down" (921) and blame the *daemones* for causing "unexpected and outstanding evil" for the Persians (1005-7). Yet the Chorus also holds Xerxes responsible. They speak of the ἥβαν Ξέρξαι κταμεναν, Ἄιδου σάκτορι Περσᾶν,

(923-4), the "youth killed by Xerxes, who filled Hades up with Persians," and call Xerxes μεγάλατε (1016), "man of great *Ate*."

Xerxes' position on his own culpability is more complex. Xerxes seems apologetic and genuinely distressed at the loss of his men (cf. 987-91 in particular).[260] His wish to have died with his soldiers seems to convey his despair, but may also have a ring of heroism (915-7).[261] Xerxes recognizes that he has met a hateful fate (909-10) and that he is therefore wretched (912, 932, 1014-5) and lamentable (931). He acknowledges that he abandoned his men to die (963-65) and goes so far as to admit that he has "become an evil to his people and to his fatherland" (932-3), but his conception of his fate is otherwise quite passive (cf. 1008, 1015). Xerxes never takes responsibility for his part in the loss of so many men and certainly never apologizes to the Chorus or to anyone else for what he has done. Spectators who see him as a victim of the gods and of his particular circumstances may have considered this response to be justified. After all, if nothing that happened was really under his control, if he was merely the gods' instrument for the destruction of the army, then he has nothing to be sorry for. Yet those who see him as something more than a pawn of the gods or, worse, as the agent primarily responsible for bringing the gods down upon Persia, may have felt that Xerxes is refusing to take responsibility for his failure of leadership.[262] For these spectators, Xerxes'

[260] Schenker 1994: 291 suggests that Xerxes' "remorse, is crucial to the reconciliation between king and nation."
[261] Cf. *Od.* 5.306-312 in which Odysseus wishes that he had died honorably at Troy rather than suffer his present fate (dishonorable death at sea).
[262] Winnington-Ingram 1983: 14 suggests that Xerxes simply fails to understand what the audience has learned from Darius. With regard to his punishment by the gods, "he fails to understand the principles upon which it is based."

lamentation may have smacked of self-pity. He is mourning *his* fate rather than that of his men, his last and most pathetic act of self-interest of the play.[263]

VII.4 From Revolution to Reconciliation

The Messenger's account of Salamis and the events that follow may be the climax of the action in the *Persians* (Broadhead 1960: xxxiii, Michelini 1982: 72), but it leaves unanswered crucial questions that have been developing throughout the play.[264] A tension on the verge of fissure has developed over the course of the play between Xerxes and his subjects. Xerxes and his army were initially presented as a unified whole, though the Persians left at home already stand off to the side. Xerxes' actions at Salamis coupled with his being one of its few survivors shows Xerxes and his subjects at odds, a situation emphasized by the Queen's claim that he will not be punished for his actions and by the Chorus's fears that the Empire will fall as a result of what Xerxes has done. The final scene of the play stages a mini-drama centered on the question of how Xerxes will be received by the Persians. Will Xerxes be punished for his actions, or will he continue to rule Persia without accounting for what he has done?

The initial exchanges between the Chorus and Xerxes suggest the possibility that Xerxes will not be accepted in Persia. As they did in the ode that followed the news of the Persians' defeat, the Chorus once more seems to illustrate the breakdown of Persian royal authority that they themselves claimed to fear. Spectators may have recalled that

[263] Griffith 1998: 54 notes that the depiction of Xerxes could have been much worse. Xerxes "is not characterized as effeminate or degenerate: he is no Aigisthos or Paris."

[264] The focus on Salamis and nod to the later battles might have been enough for a play that focused on the Athenian experience in the war. With its focus on Persian characters and the Persian perception of what happened, Aeschylus' *Persians* is likely to have left spectators curious about how these events affected the Empire.

the Chorus members are in fact high-ranking Persian officials and have been told by Darius to admonish Xerxes and to convince him to give up his rash ways (829-31). But the spectacle of subjects berating the absolute ruler of Persia may nevertheless have been striking, particular given what spectators have been led to believe about the nature of Xerxes' rule. When Xerxes takes the stage, he no longer looks like a Persian king or general. Spectators might have thought twice when he says that that his limbs go weak when he sees his citizens (913-4). Xerxes may be referring to the absence of young men in his audience (Broadhead 1960: 224), but he may also feel fear in the face of his people.

The Chorus's behavior suggests that he may have something to be worried about. Their attitude toward Xerxes is in keeping with the trend in the last third of the *Persians* to treat him like an impetuous child. They do not "revere him by falling before him on the ground" (cf. 588-90) as they did for his mother and his father (Hall 1989: 97, Dworacki 1994: 106.). Gone are the reverential addresses (cf. 155-8; 694-6; 700-702; cf. Hall 1996: 169, Sommerstein 1996: 94). The Chorus's tongues are not "on guard" (cf. 591-593). The Chorus has criticized Xerxes before, but they refrained from doing so in front of his parents (Dworacki 1994: 107). Here, they waste little time before accusing Xerxes to his face of killing their countrymen. They do not try to comfort him, but inspire Xerxes to new heights of misery. When they ask about the fate of a series of Persians (956-61; 966-73; 978-86), Xerxes admits that they are dead (974-77) and tells the Chorus that they are "making him long for [these] good comrades" (988-90). The Chorus nevertheless offers another list of dead Persians (992-1001). As Broadhead observes, they are "rub[bing] salt into the wretched King's wounds" (1960: xxv; cf. McClure 1996: 88.). Xerxes' remorse does not appear to satisfy them.

Roughly halfway through the scene, however, the dynamic between Xerxes and the Chorus begins to change. Previously, the Chorus appeared to dominate Xerxes, goading him with accusations and questions to which he is forced to respond. At line 1002, Xerxes is answering a question but, in doing so, initiates a call-and-response with the Chorus that lasts until the end of the play (Avery 1964: 181). Another change occurs at 1008-9, when Xerxes complains πεπλήμγεθα, "we are struck," and the Chorus answers: πεπλήγμεθα. This is his first use of the first-person plural. With it Xerxes appears to identify himself with the Chorus (Avery 1964: 181), and the Chorus accepts the identification. They admit that, regardless of who is responsible, they are all in the same situation (Avery 1964: 181). From that point forward the antagonistic nature of the exchange is dropped, and Xerxes and the Chorus are lamenting the fate of the empire together (cf. Schenker 1994: 292). Xerxes has been "reintegrated" into Persia (Griffith 1998: 63).[265] And spectators could have been influenced by and even followed, the Chorus' example in their move from initial dismay with Xerxes to final acceptance.[266]

By line 1038, Xerxes and the Chorus fall into a familiar pattern. As Avery observes, "Xerxes is in complete command of the situation":

> His first line contains three imperatives, beginning a series of commands that lasts to the end of the play. He directs the chorus to bewail the sorrow and to go home. The chorus immediately carries out his first command…. Thereafter Xerxes' every line (except the last two) contains a command…which the chorus obeys. (1964: 182)

[265] According to Griffith, the "final scene, with its close alternation of lyrics between leader and escort, King and subjects, accompanied by ritualistic co-ordination of hair-tearing and garment-shredding in time to the music, provides a powerful and engaging operation of commiseration and reintegration."
[266] Cf. McCall 1986: 46: "the chorus, whose dignity Aeschylus has developed so carefully, is now in a position to give him substantial aid; furthermore, it manifests the sort of direct but sympathetic response to the events and personages of the play that Aeschylus hopes to elicit from his audience."

After answering to the Chorus, Xerxes reclaims his place at the head of the Empire. His absolute rule appears to be intact, just as the Queen predicted, and it seems that Persia will survive in more or less the same form that it existed prior to the war (Podlecki 1986: 79, Schenker 1994: 293).[267] This development may annoyed many spectators.

VIII Conclusion

The dramatic progression in the final kommos from the Chorus's initial rejection of Xerxes to the eventual reconciliation between the King and his subjects seems to argue that Aeschylus was up to something more than simply showing a despondent Xerxes and Chorus or showcasing the singing voices of his actors. For some spectators, the final reconciliation between Xerxes and his people may have been of little interest. Persia has been broken. Who cares that Xerxes still rules what is left of it? On the other hand, spectators who were swept up at the sight of a man trying to cope with utter failure and the loss of his Empire and birthright and who themselves felt a rush of painful and overwhelming emotions during the scene might have felt some solace in the final reconciliation. Though it is not a happy ending, it suggests that life will go on and may have left eased the sense of pathos felt by spectators at the play's conclusion.[268] Spectators who held Xerxes fully responsible for what has happened to Persia and who did not believe that he was sufficiently punished may have felt that his reconciliation and reintegration into Persia were un-earned. They may have been hoping that the Chorus would reject Xerxes and throw off the yoke of authority and felt dismay at the Chorus's

[267] This appears to be what actually happened. Estimations of the effect that Persia's defeat has upon the Empire are undoubtedly exaggerated in this play.
[268] The effect may have been somewhat similar to that of the conclusion of the *Oedipus Tyrannos*.

willingness to subject themselves to the king (cf. Hartog 1988: 332, Rosenbloom 2006: 137-8). Finally, despite Darius' assurance that Persia would never successfully invade Greece, some spectators, particularly those who had or would take part in ongoing military expeditions against Persia, might have seen in the reconciliation and the knowledge that the Persian Empire would not fall an impending threat to Athens' safety, a kind of ominous "to be continued."[269]

[269] Griffith 1998: 64-5 discusses the ambiguous message regarding the status of "elite family-oriented aspirations" at the end of the play. There is of course no strict continuation of this or any issue in *Glaucus*, the next play in the trilogy. It seems unlikely that *Glaucus*, whether it treated the events at Plataea or moved back in time to the Argonauts (see Broadhead 1960: lvii-lviii), would not be anticlimactic after this play. Perhaps by placing the *Persians* between two more conventional plays, Aeschylus was hoping to soften the effect of a play that treated a historical event.

CHAPTER 2: ETEOCLES AND THE *SEVEN AGAINST THEBES*

INTRODUCTION

The *Seven against Thebes* concludes Aeschylus' Theban trilogy and dramatizes the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices, cursed to die at one another's hands and end Laius' line. Of all Aeschylus' plays, the *Seven against Thebes* has traditionally invited the most character-based criticism.[270] This focus is understandable. For its first three quarters, the play is tightly aligned with the perspective of Eteocles, its primary dramatic character, laying out the actions he takes in response to a series of events, including the invasion of a foreign army, the appearance of a group of terrified women, the selection of enemy champions, and the decision to face his own brother in battle. Yet while critics have acknowledged the importance of Eteocles for understanding the *Seven*, most have focused on uncovering the "truth" about Eteocles, i.e., whether he is a noble hero defending his city until the moment of his death, an accursed wretch from the very beginning, or a good man brought low by the gods and force of his father's impending curse.

As in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on how spectators were intended to perceive, and how they may actually have perceived, Eteocles rather than on any underlying reality. It examines the process through which spectators come to recognize the nature of Eteocles and how the play both invites and discourages spectators'

[270] Cf. Burnett 1973: 343: "There seems to be a general agreement now that *Septem* is, just as Kitto long ago said it was, the first tragedy of character…." Rosenmeyer 1963: 16 also notes the importance of the characterization of Eteocles in the play: " the means by which melodrama is prevented… are, principally, the dynamics of the selection scene, and the gradual self-revelation, completely unexpected, of Eteocles, who in the end turns out to be, and to have been…quite different from what we had a right to expect." See also Winnington-Ingram 1983: 116.

allegiance to him. I argue that, initially, the play strongly implies, but does not establish beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Eteocles is a paragon of Greek manhood and a noble defender of his city with whom Athenian spectators could identify. It does so by suppressing his personal history and by juxtaposing him with a band of stereotypical, terrified women and a hoard of unambiguously impious, unjust foreigners, similar to the Persian invaders of 490 and 480. It is likely that the *Seven* is here playing on Greek, and specifically male citizen Athenian, notions of self and other.[271] Cartledge discusses the Greek tendency to "identi[fy] negatively, by means of a series of polarized oppositions of themselves to what they were not" and counts barbarians and women among those the Greeks considered polar opposites (2003: 4-12); Hall has observed that "the barbarian is often portrayed as the opposite of the ideal Greek" and suggests that "Greek writing about barbarians is usually an exercise in self-definition" (1989: 1).[272] Questions about Eteocles emerge, however, when the play introduces Polyneices' accusations of injustice against him, points to increasing similarities between the brothers, and shows how their fates have long since been sealed by their father's curse and by will of Apollo. In this way, the play begins to alienate spectators' allegiance to Eteocles in the moments before and after his death so that they can either mourn the loss of a beloved hero at the play's

[271] It would be an oversimplification to suggest that every Athenian man would consider barbarians and women absolutely unlike themselves, but fifth-century Athenians could certainly imagine a caricature of a barbarian or a women (perhaps similar to the ones that appear in this play) whom they would consider hopelessly "other."

[272] It is possible that the audience of the play actually were mostly fifth-century Athenian citizen men, but even if women and children and perhaps foreigners also attended the play, it is important to note that actual makeup of the audience is less important than its ideological makeup. See the introduction. Views about "us" and "them" may have been felt more deeply by those who might be thought closer to the "other" than to the "us." Cf. Rosenmeyer 1982: 172, who observes that "[b]oth tragedy and comedy suggest that, given half a chance, the commoners are happy to follow their more privileged leaders and to fall in with the cultural ideals championed by them."

conclusion, appreciate that the house of Laius has come to its conclusion in accordance with the will of the gods, or feel some combination of the two.

I The Story Before the Seven

Whereas the other plays that are discussed in this dissertation are intended to stand alone (*Persians*), are the first plays of their trilogy (*Suppliants*), or are part of a trilogy that has survived as a whole (the *Oresteia*), the *Seven* is the final play of a connected trilogy in which the other plays are now lost to us. We know next to nothing about the two plays that preceded the *Seven*, *Laius* and *Oedipus*, but, if the *Oresteia* is any kind of guide, it stands to reason that spectators' response to the events and the characters depicted in the *Seven* will be conditioned to some extent by what they have seen in the first plays of the trilogy. Thus, though we can say little with certainty, it is necessary to have a sense of the range of events that audiences might have encountered in these plays before preceding with our treatment of the *Seven*.[273]

Our most reliable evidence for what happened in the plays that preceded the *Seven* comes from the *Seven* itself. In the ode that immediately precedes the news of Eteocles and Polyneices' death, the Chorus recounts the events that began with Laius and culminate in Eteocles and Polyneices' meeting at the seventh gate. We learn of a "transgression" that was "punished swiftly but lasts into the third generation" (743-4): Laius was told three times at Delphi never to have children in order to save his city (745-49), but was conquered ἐκ φιλᾶν ἀβουλιᾶν (750), "by dear imprudence," where the

[273] See Winnington-Ingram 1983: 48 on the necessity of taking the preceding plays into account. For previous attempts to reconstruct the trilogy, see Mette 1959: 31-4, Podlecki 1975: 8-14, Thalmann 1978: 23-25, Hutchinson 1985: xxiii-xxx, and Sommerstein 1989: 121-9.

adjective φιλός, "dear" or "beloved," could refer to love or sexual desire for his wife (Tucker 1908: 154) or to a desire for children (Hutchinson 1985: 167, Sommerstein 2008: 230-1 n.109). Although the Chorus does not explain why Apollo forbade Laius from having children and no explanation may have been given, some critics have suggested that it came as a result of Laius' rape of Chrysippus and the ensuing curse of Pelops (see Jebb 1893: xvii, xix, Lloyd-Jones 1983: 120-1, 2002: 11-2).[274] In any event, Laius' crime and his punishment are one and the same: the result of his transgression is Oedipus, the child who will eventually kill his father and marry his mother (751-56). Fr. 122a Radt suggests that Laius first attempted to expose Oedipus, but there is no indication that Laius knew that the child would one day murder him, and he may simply have been trying to undo his act of disobedience.

We are told that before the nature of his birth and his crimes came to light, Oedipus was a source of wonder to gods and men (772-75). The Chorus implies that Oedipus grew too prosperous (768-71), and this may be why a παράνοια φρενώλης, "frenzied madness," brought "the bridal pair" (νυμφίους) together (736-7; cf. 778). If the Chorus are indeed speaking here of Oedipus and his mother,[275] the "madness" may figuratively refer to their ignorance, but could also suggest a somewhat different, and potentially less sympathetic version of the story, in which Oedipus marries his mother not out of ignorance, but because he is momentarily out of his wits (by indulgence in wine? by gods punishing his prosperity? as punishment for murdering his father?) (see

[274] Podlecki 1975: 14 and, more recently, Hubbard 2006: 234- question this assumption. Hutchinson 1985: xxiii suggests that the seduction of Chrysippus may have led Apollo to make his pronouncement against Laius. Thalmann 1978: 14 argues that while pederasty would not be inherently problematic in fifth-century Athens, Aeschylus may have used Chrysippus' suicide as motive for Pelops' curse.
[275] This seems the most natural way to interpret the line given its placement and the fact that no mention has been made of Laius' wife. See the discussion at Hutchinson 1985: 168.

Hutchinson 1985: 168). Fr. 122a of *Laius* mentions a killer tasting his victim's blood, an act attributed to deceitful killings intending to avert vengeance. This may be part of a false report of Laius' death, but if Oedipus tasted Laius' blood, we have an indication that the death was not just an accident (cf. Sommerstein 1996: 121). According to the Chorus, when Oedipus "came back to his senses" (ἀρτίφρων ἐγένετο, 778), but was still "vexed by the pain of his wretched marriage"[276] and with a "crazed heart" (μαινομέναι κραδίαι), he tore out his eyes and cursed his sons (778-91). The Chorus says that Oedipus did so because he was angered at his sons' wretched τροφή (785-6), a term that is open to some interpretation. τροφή could refer to the sons' "generation," such that Oedipus, in a fit of rage, curses his sons merely for having been born of his incestuous union (Hutchinson 1985: xxv). Yet the scholiast at S. *O.C* 1375 tells us that the circumstances of Oedipus' curse in *Laius* are similar to those in the lost epic *Thebais*, where Oedipus curses his sons for disgracing him with a bad portion of meat (fr. 3), perhaps hoping to take advantage of his blindness. This has led scholars to conclude that τροφή refers to Eteocles' and Polynices' "care-taking" and that Oedipus is angry at his sons because they have failed to take care of him in his old age (Sommerstein 1989: 441).[277]

It is difficult to know what exactly spectators learned prior to the *Seven* about the curse that threatens Eteocles and Polyneices. Oedipus' curse seems to have involved the brothers' dividing their property through violence, specifically with iron (cf. 727-33, 788-

[276] Here I follow Hutchinson 1985: 168 in taking ἀθλίων γάμων with ἐπ' ἄλγει rather than μέλεος.
[277] See Sommerstein 1989: 444, who imagines that Oedipus' "sons…had control of his property, but were failing in the basic filial duty of γηροτροφία, or at best performing it in a grudging and inadequate manner….In Aeschylus, it seems, the sons were already neglecting and slighting their father before anything was known to his discredit." See also Winnington-Ingram 1983: 47.

91, 815-819, 877-8). This may even have been the motivation for their dispute. Eteocles' prayer to his father's Curse and Erinys before the battle (70) and his observation that Oedipus' curse has been fulfilled before the brothers' deaths (655) suggest that the curse did not spell out that the brothers would kill one another (cf. von Fritz 1962: 218, Burnett 1973: 354). In fact, spectators may have been led to believe in the possibility of a reconciliation between the brothers, that may also have involved iron (885, 906-10, 941-46; cf. 766-7).[278]

Judging by the references to the curse at the end of the *Seven*, its formulation in the *Oedipus* is likely to have involved iron, reconciliation, and winning Oedipus' land (Hutchinson 1985: xxix). Aeschylus may have used the multiple referents of iron, the ambiguity of the idea of a "reconciliation," and the misleading notion that the brothers would win Oedipus' land to create suspense with regard to how the curse would be fulfilled in a subsequent play.[279] At first, spoken in anger, the curse would suggest a violent reconciliation with iron spears, in which one brother would win Thebes. Characters in the play and even some spectators might have been led to believe at one time or another that Aeschylus was altering the myth and that reconciliation through iron meant that the matter would be settled peacefully by iron lots.[280] Only at the end of *Seven* would it be absolutely clear to all spectators and to the characters in the play that the

[278] Burnett 1973: 59 argues that while Oedipus' curse predicted a division through violence, the dream to which Eteocles refers at 710-1 spoke of "a lawful mediator, one who would bring quarrel to an end with a drawing of lots."
[279] Patzer 1958: 101 notes that, in tragedy, curses, like oracles, are often presented in such a way that they will be initially misconstrued.
[280] The brothers may have begun by (unsuccessfully) using lots to divide the property. The Argives' use of lots to determine who would fight at which gate might have been intended to momentarily point to yet another interpretation of the curse. The fact that the Argives have a σιδηρόφρων θυμὸς, an "iron-hearted spirit," also may also have come into play in this regard.

brothers would solve their dispute with iron spears, reconcile with one another only in death, and win nothing more than burial plots in their native land (911-14).

In addition to Oedipus' curse, the Chorus also sees Laius' failure to adhere to Apollo's injunction as bringing about the death of Eteocles and Polyneices (840-2, cf. 743-4). The Chorus may simply blame Laius' disobedience insofar as it began the process that culminated to the quarrel of Eteocles and Polyneices. Yet the Chorus may also see a more intimate relationship between Apollo's oracle and the quarrel. Laius was told that he would endanger the city if he had children (749). Burnett takes Apollo's injunction to mean that Laius' (male) descendents will continue to pose a threat to Thebes as long as they live (1973: 367-8). This view may find support when the Chorus says that the Curses sing a song of triumph over the dead brothers, having routed their line (γένος) (955-6). If it was spelled out in one of the oracles that Eteocles and Polyneices' mere existence was contrary to the will of the gods, or if spectators came to this conclusion independently, they may never have become particularly attached to this doomed pair, or they may have felt for them throughout the play as victims of the gods.

The most important question for this project is how the events depicted in *Laius* and *Oedipus* would have affected spectators' view of Eteocles and Polyneices going into the *Seven*, though, again, we can be certain about very little. The plays may have created some general expectations with regard to the fate of the brothers. The depiction of the working of the family curses over two generations would inevitably reveal patterns which spectators could expect to be repeated in the third generation. The fundamental consideration with regard to the curses of *Laius* and *Oedipus* would be whether they worked regardless of guilt or innocence and in spite of their victims' best efforts, as in the

case of Sophocles' Oedipus, or if they were pronounced in answer to injustices, worked in conjunction with human actions, and came to fruition through the crimes of its victims.[281] In other words, would Eteocles and Polyneices be seen primarily as relatively blameless victims of a family curse, or would they be considered just as culpable as their father and grandfather for what befell them? The emphasis on Laius' disobedience to the gods and the suggestion of a more problematic role for Oedipus in the murder of his father and marriage to his mother point to the latter conclusion.[282] The suggestion on the part of the Chorus that Oedipus suffered because he was "too prosperous" may, however, point to the former. More likely than not, and in keeping with the findings of the previous chapter, one could find indications that would support both of these interpretations of the curses in *Laius* and *Oedipus*.

The most direct effect upon spectators' opinion of Eteocles and Polyneices in the *Seven* would of course be achieved if spectators actually encountered Eteocles and Polyneices on stage, presumably in *Laius*.[283] Again, the question is whether they would have been portrayed as victims or perpetrators. At one extreme, if spectators saw a deranged Oedipus cursing his sons merely for being born, they might have been sympathetically disposed toward Eteocles and Polyneices, attributing any subsequent failures of judgment on their part to the influence of the curse. On the other hand, if the sons were shown abusing their father, spectators may have been more likely to conclude that they brought the curse down on themselves. Spectators might, then, have looked

[281] For the latter view, see Dodds 1951: 39-40, Lesky 1966: 15, Gantz 1982: 1-8, and Sewell-Rutter 2007: 48, 76.
[282] One would certainly include here any mistreatment of Chrysippus by Laius, if it was depicted in the play. See above.
[283] Most critics agree that Aeschylus' Theban trilogy treated the downfall of the Labdacids generation by generation. Cf. Mette 1959: 34, Thalmann 1978: 24, and Hutchinson 1985: xxix-xxx. See Gantz 1982: 23 on the brother's presence in *Laius*.

forward to their punishment and have been slow to sympathize with either brother's plight in the *Seven*. We must keep in mind the possibility that, even if Oedipus curses his sons' for dishonoring him, he could have misconstrued his sons' actions or blamed them unjustly (e.g., Theseus in Euripides' *Hippolytus*). It is certainly possible that *Oedipus* presented a more sympathetic depiction of one brother as compared to the other. Athenaeus 9.465e, for instance, reports a version of the myth attributed to the *Thebais* (fr. 2), in which Oedipus curses his sons because Polyneices alone served him on Laius' silver. Robert argued that *Oedipus* dramatized the agreement through which the brothers would share rule of Thebes and its dissolution as a result of Eteocles' actions (1915 cited in Podlecki 1975: 11-2),[284] but one can find later sources that place the blame on Polyneices.[285] It is possible that *Oedipus* treated the reasons for Eteocles' and Polyneices' dispute, but there is no indication in the *Seven* of an agreement or of an injustice on the part of either brother. If such an agreement had been made and subsequently broken, it would be surprising that neither brother mentions it in their arguments against one another.[286] It seems safest to conclude that, if the terms of the agreement were presented in the *Oedipus*, neither brother would be unequivocally in the wrong, even if their actions were not entirely above reproach.

[284] Podlecki finds it unlikely "that Aeschylus devoted a major portion of the *Oedipus* to a portrayal of the enraged father cursing his sons," given the "trivial nature of the reasons for the curse which the Cyclic *Thebaid* offered."
[285] See Thalmann 1978: 20-22.
[286] Von Fritz 1962: 210 dismisses Robert's suggestion on the grounds that there is not enough space for both the curse and the agreement in Oedipus. Patzer 1958: 101 argues that the curse was the "last major event of *Oedipus*."

II A New Eteocles?

Although it may be an illusion created by the loss of *Laius* and *Oedipus*, the opening of the *Seven* seems to make a break from what precedes it. Spectators may have come to the performance of Aeschylus' Theban trilogy expecting a negative depiction of Thebes; Froma Zeitlin and Pierre Vidal-Naquet have argued that Thebes occupied a special place in the Athenian imagination as a negative mirror image of the city of Athens (1990: 131 and 1990; see also Goff 1990: 353). The events depicted in *Laius* and *Oedipus* are unlikely to have dispelled these notions. It is notable, then, that the *Seven* begins with a relatively positive depiction of Eteocles that emphasizes his role as a general defending his city against a serious threat and shows evidence of his respect for the gods. The opening scenes all but bypass Eteocles' personal history. Polyneices is not even mentioned, and Eteocles acknowledges the events of *Laius* and *Oedipus* with nothing more than a prayer to his father's Curse and Fury. We may judge from this that the play is attempting to draw attention away from Eteocles' past and begin anew with a potentially sympathetic portrait of the man.

II.1 The General at Work

Eteocles opens the *Seven* by defining a leader: a man who says the right thing at the right time, controls and guides his city like the captain of a ship, and stays vigilant (1-3). Most of Aeschylus' spectators would presumably accept this as a valid definition, and they would therefore appreciate it when Eteocles proceeds to demonstrate most of these qualities in his address to the people of Thebes (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 21): Eteocles has met with an augur who warned of the coming battle (24-29) and has sent a

spy out into the night to learn of the enemy's plans (36-7) in order to avoid being outmaneuvered (literally, "so that I am not taken by deceipt"); he exhorts and inspires his citizens to come to the city's defense (10-20, 33-35) and dispatches them to their proper places on the battlements (30-33); Eteocles seems to acknowledge that he is ultimately responsible for the city's welfare (5-9). In everything he does, Eteocles appears to "meet the masculine expectations of courage, strength, fraternity, order, self-control, discipline, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and service to the state" held by many Athenian men (Roisman 2005: 105) and to be an "exemplary leader" of his city (Jackson 1988: 290).[287] On this basis, most spectators are likely to have considered his actions praiseworthy.

One moment in Eteocles' speech could, however, have given spectators pause. Eteocles states that it is god's responsibility if they succeed but that, if something bad happens, Ἐτεοκλέης ἄν ἧις πολὺς κατὰ πτόλιν ὑμνοῖθ' ὑπ' ἀστῶν φροιμίους πολυρρόθοις οἰμώγμασίν θ', "Eteocles' alone would often be sung by the citizens in loud-sounding overtures and wails" (4-8). Hubbard points out that these words "function as a *kledon*, a verbal utterance which acts as an omen proving true in a way different from that intended" (1992: 306), and spectators already familiar with the story may have understood it as such. In the context of Eteocles' speech, however, citizens of Athens may have seen his awareness that credit for success often goes to the gods while responsibility for failure is often placed on leaders as a particularly nice touch that

[287] Halliwell 1997: 126-7 suggests that "the protagonist-ruler begins the play with a display of commanding and confident authority which is strongly marked by the eloquence of formal proclamation." According to Halliwell, Eteocles' speech "combines the acceptance of political responsibility with the issuing of military exhortations," and "is a consciously assured and vigilant statement of the public control of crisis." See also Podlecki 1964: 284. Patzer 1958 suggests that according to the curse, Eteocles and the city's fate were intertwined and that the audience would therefore view Eteocles' vehemence in defending the city as fundamentally selfish. Von Fritz 1962: 219 somewhat amusingly reflects that "[w]hoever accepts at this point the interpretation which Patzer discusses as a possibility that Eteocles is not in reality a good leader will reveal in this way that he has not understood the piece."

demonstrates Eteocles' "intelligent pragmatism" (Brown 1977: 300, 301) and savvy as a leader. Some spectators, however, may have interpreted Eteocles' sentiment as an expression of distaste for his people that offers a momentary indication of tension in the city between Eteocles and his citizens.[288] This might have been jarring to proponents of democracy.

II.2 Eteocles and the Gods

There can be little doubt that Eteocles has respect for the gods and understands their importance with regard to the salvation of his city. He calls upon Zeus to defend Thebes (8-9) and later prays to Zeus, Earth, the "gods of the city" (πολισσοῦχοι θεοὶ), and the Curse and powerful Fury of his father (Ἀρά τ' Ἐρινὺς πατὸς ἡ μεγασθενής) to save the city from destruction (69-75). Eteocles acknowledges that god has been on their side (21) and that Thebes has been successful in withstanding the siege for so long "because of the gods" (ἐκ θεῶν). He tells his men that εὖ τελεῖ θέος (35), "god brings success," and he appears to be sincere when he asks for their help in war and attempts to gain their assistance by suggesting that they have a vested interest in Thebes' welfare (76-7).[289] Eteocles does not appear merely to be paying the gods lip service: he orders his men to protect the altars of the native gods "so that their honors are never erased" (14-5).

And yet, Eteocles' view of the gods is slightly unconventional for a character in a Greek tragedy. His repeated references to an unspecified θεός that determines events

[288] See *Supp.* 398-401 for a similar sentiment. Here Pelasgus' worries about being blamed by his people may also reveal tension between the ruler and his citizens which might have made some spectators uncomfortable. Also cf. *Supp*. 273 in this regard. See below in chapter 3.
[289] This is a standard aspect of Greek prayer and is unlikely to have sounded impious to Greek ears.

from afar (4, 21, 35; cf. 23) suggests a conception of the gods that reflects what Gould describes as "a universal (and among ancient Greeks universally accepted) implicit acknowledgement of the limitations of human knowledge," namely the "necessary uncertainty in matters concerning the gods" (2001: 362-3).[290] Eteocles recognizes that god brings success, but he also recognizes that gods can be fickle, observing that god has been on their side νῦν μὲν εἰς τόδ' ἦμαρ (21), "up till now at least." This rationalizing conception of the divine speaks to spectators who had never had a god visibly intervene on their behalf or who considered themselves above superstition.[291] Eteocles' views may have seemed slightly out of place on the tragic stage, where gods could appear in person, but they may also have struck Athenian spectators in 467 as realistic and modern.[292] Eteocles would be walking the line between adopting current thinking on the gods in Athens and spouting old-fashioned impieties. Eteocles' complaint that god will get credit for a victory but that *he* will be blamed for a defeat, could have been seen as an insightful commentary on the exploitation of slippage in the conception of divine and human agency for one's own purposes. Yet other spectators would have felt that Eteocles is taking something away from the gods and demonstrating a failure to grasp how the gods

[290] Gould is discussing Herodotus' apparent aversion to divine causation: "[i]t is due, as I have argued elsewhere, to the built-in 'uncertainty principle' which is a necessary part of any phenomenological religion; in such a religious system, the action of divinity is not revealed: it can only be inferred from the outward signs of that activity and these signs are almost never so unambiguous as to allow the inference to be certain" (p. 362). See also Lateiner 1989: 197-203 and Harrison 2000: 171-5 on the use of ὁ θεός in Herodotus.

[291] Gould (2001), 363 and n.7 acknowledges the resemblance of these views to the thinking of Xenophanes and Alkmaion, but suggests that Xenophanes and Alkmaion's "statements in themselves (apart, that is, from the inferences [they] draw from them) are no more than generalized formulations for what all ancient Greeks implicitly took for granted in their response to the possibility of divine incursions into their experience."

[292] It may be meaningful that we also find similar references to an unspecified "god" in the *Persians*, a play that took place in contemporary times.

function in human affairs. For them, Eteocles' abstraction of the gods would have bordered on an act of sacrilege that would not bode well for him.[293]

II.3 The Argives

At this stage, references to the Argives convey the threat that they pose to Thebes and thus the need for Eteocles' leadership. The Scout's description of the Argive leaders is worrisome, but not entirely damning. The Argives are intent upon destroying Thebes, swearing an oath by bull's blood to Ares, Enyo, and the god Terror either to raze the city or die trying (42-8). They are "raging" (θούροι, 42) and pitiless (51). As described by the Scout, the Argives present an interesting combination of cold, courageous, and animalistic: σιδηρόφρων…θυμὸς ἀνδρείαι φλέγων ἔπνει, λεόντων ὡς Ἄρη δεδορκότων (52-3), "their iron-hearted spirit was burning with courage and heaving as with lions looking for a fight." Even their horses appear to be complicit in their assault upon the city: the Scout offers an unsettling picture of the Argives' mounts "staining" (χραίνει) the plains of Thebes with their saliva as they are spurred on toward the city (61-2). Yet the Scout also includes potentially humanizing details. Knowing, rightly, that they may die, the Argives send items home by which their parents may remember and shed tears over them (49-52). Soldiers and family members in the audience could readily to sympathize with this aspect of the men.

While the Scout's account of the Argives leaves spectators some room to sympathize with the Argives, Eteocles' exhortations to his men do not. Eteocles' call for his men to protect the city and their children was conventional for a leader under these

[293] Cf. Podlecki 1964: 288, who feels that Eteocles' god is too abstract and looks suspiciously like "Lady luck" or mere chance.

circumstances, but it also reveals what is at stake for Thebes and suggests that it is absolutely essential that Eteocles' prescriptions be followed to the letter lest the Thebans emerge victorious. Similarly, his call to protect the altars of the gods may be hyperbole, but it could also imply that, if successful, the Argives would not only take the city, but desecrate its holy sites. Given the destruction of Athenian temples and shrines by the Persians in 480, not to mention the consequences of Athens own part in the desecration of Sardis, this would have been a sensitive subject for most Athenians. Those who concluded that this was indeed the Argives' intent would certainly have held it against them.

The suggestion of foreign invaders intending to destroy their homes and commit sacrilege may even have led some spectators to draw direct parallels between the Thebans' attempt to defend themselves from the Argives and Athens' struggles against Persia, Athens' own impious invaders. These negative associations would have been strengthened when Eteocles later asks the gods not only to save Thebes from destruction, but also to prevent this "free land" from being held by the "bonds of slavery" (74-5), implying, if not quite stating, that this is what the Argives have in store for the city should they be victorious. Although the prospect of slavery might be a reality for any defeated city, the fight for freedom was an integral aspect in Athenian thinking about their struggle against the Persians and may therefore have reinforced parallels between Thebes and Athens, the Argives and the Persians.[294] No spectators would conclude that Thebes is Athens and Argos Persia, but the connection between the Argive invaders and

[294] See Hall 1996: 112 on the "yoke of slavery" at *Persians* line 50 where she discusses the threat of slavery at the hands of the Persians both with regard to the *Persians* and the *Seven* and alludes to Xerxes' promise to enslave Greece in Herodotus (7.8.3). See also Nippel 2002: 288-90.

the Persians, repulsed only 13 years ago, is there for spectators to make. Taken together, these aspects of the Argives are unlikely to have endeared them to a primarily Athenian audience.[295]

II.4 King of Thebes, Son of Oedipus

In spite of the primarily positive portrayal of Eteocles in the prologue and in the dialogue with the Scout, few spectators would forget that Eteocles is the troubled offspring of an incestuous union, cursed by his own father. Torrence, for instance, suggests that even the call for the Thebans to fight on behalf of their children and their motherland is "unsettling when coming from the mouth of Eteocles, where references to children and mothers remind us of his parents' incestuous union" (2007: 28). And yet, the conventional nature of this kind of encouragement and the lack of any references to Eteocles' family in the prologue, despite the fact that the war they are fighting is against Eteocles' own brother, suggest that this is not the primary purpose of these and other references and that, as a result, this reading may only have occurred to a minority of spectators (cf. Jackson 1988: 290). On balance, it appears that, without entirely dismissing it, the play is attempting to draw attention away from Eteocles' past and create a fresh start.

There is, however, one notable exception, namely Eteocles' prayer that Thebes not be destroyed nor enslaved, which is directed at, among other divinities, the Curse and the mighty Fury of his father (69-75). This would certainly remind spectators of Eteocles' family history, though the fact that the prayer is for the welfare of his city may

[295] The fact that these insights come from a biased source would probably not have occur to many spectators at this stage in the play.

have offset any negative connotations, at least for the moment. It seems unlikely that Eteocles knows that he is doomed to kill his brother and die by his hand and nevertheless offers here a prayer to the curse and Fury that have doomed him in a misplaced attempt to persuade the implacable Fury to take mercy upon him (so Stehle 2005: 111-2). It has also been suggested that Eteocles is not asking the Fury to spare him, but rather asking it to be more specific in carrying out its work, i.e., bringing about, as it must, the destruction of Eteocles and his brother, but sparing Thebes.[296] Yet Eteocles' reaction when he realizes that he will meet his brother in battle suggests that he is not yet aware that the curse calls for his death at the hands of his brother (von Fritz 1966: 199) and that his prayers that Thebes not be conquered and enslaved might just as well be prayers for his own success. The most likely explanation is that Eteocles calls upon the curse because he believes that the war between Thebes and the Argives will fulfill Oedipus' call for a division of his property through violence and hopes that the Curse will go no further and spare the city (cf. Sommerstein 1995: 98). Most spectators would have known, or at least suspected, that this would not be the case and that Eteocles is in fact calling out to the divinity that will bring about his destruction. In this way, without reflecting badly on Eteocles, his prayer would point forward to the outcome of his efforts to save the city.

[296] The word πόλις, "city," is emphasized here by the particle γε. This is one of the primary bases for the *Opfertod* theory, according to which Eteocles is a hero who willingly sacrifices himself to save the city. See Thalmann 1978: 180 for a discussion of this theory with bibliography. See also Zeitlin 1982: 161-8.

III Women, the Enemy, and the Gods

In the parodos, the Chorus, composed of young unmarried women, describes the movements of the Argives as they prepare and begin their assault against Thebes. They clearly express their fear and pray to the gods to save them. The Chorus presents an obvious contrast to Eteocles not only in their gender and costumes, but also in the way that they conduct themselves, in their response to the threat posed by the Argives, and in their conception of the gods. At this stage, the contrast seems likely to have had a positive effect on spectators' estimation of Eteocles and to have sustained the dominant tone of the prologue.

III.1 The Women are Frightened

The juxtaposition of Eteocles' and the Chorus's response to the Argive threat draws attention once more to Eteocles' manly virtues, including bravery, self-control, and discipline. Spectators have seen Eteocles address the situation calmly and diligently, focusing on how he can help his people. The Chorus members, in contrast, give themselves over entirely to their fear of the invaders. They too intend to help the city by supplicating the gods, but their prayers are constantly interrupted by noises from the approaching Argives and by their own fearful reactions to them. Even the form of their prayers reflect their desperation: Hutchinson argues that supplicating the gods is appropriate only "when all hope of human aid is gone," and "would suggest, to Greeks, a premature terror and despair" (1985: 74).[297] Their initial inability to decide which god to supplicate (93-4, 95-6) may also have shown their distress and confusion. In short, the

[297] Hutchinson suggests that "[t]he chorus's action…would make Eteocles' actions more justifiable in the mind of the audience."

stark contrast between Eteocles' and the Chorus's reaction to the threat may have helped spectators to recognize Eteocles' "masculine courage and practicality" (Brown 1977: 305).

Under other circumstances, most of Aeschylus' spectators could have forgiven the Chorus their reaction to the Argives. The Average fifth-century Athenian would have considered a response like the Chorus's inappropriate for a respectable man, but would likely consider it to be in keeping with their expectations of a group of unattended young women responding to the realities of war.[298] Women were traditionally thought cowardly; we find a number of instances in Aeschylus and elsewhere in Greek literature where cowardly men are called "women."[299] In the role that he gives to the Chorus in this ode, Aeschylus takes advantage of the fact that it was socially acceptable for women to give voice to their fears. Whereas Eteocles and the Scout must control themselves in order to stay in line with the average Athenians' expectations of them as men, the Chorus can convey with their desperation the true magnitude of the threat posed by the Argives.[300]

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[298] Arist. *Pol*. 3.2 1277b20-23 distinguishes between the kind of courage (literally ἀνδρεία) and self-control (σωφροσύνη) prized in men and the kind that is prized in women.

[299] Cf. the similar response of the Danaids in the *Suppliants*. Cf. also *Supp.* 913, where Pelasgus suggests that the Egyptian herald and *Ag.* 1625-27, where the Chorus calls Aegisthus a woman and accuse him of cowardice. Fraenkel 1950 *loc. cit*. gives other instances in Greek literature "of words like 'woman', 'female', etc., being applied to a man in order to characterize him as unmanly, effeminate…."

[300] Neither Eteocles nor the Scout expresses fear at the coming Argives, though Eteocles' repeated encouragements to his men to be courageous may imply that he expects them to be afraid. The Scout's account of the leaders and his emphasis on the need to act quickly may also imply that the Thebans face a very real threat. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 2003: 228-9 for the view that the women are used specifically because it is socially acceptable for them to show fear: "In my view, this gender-based contrast, and the underlying perceptions about women, are deployed in order to articulate the notion of terror in a threatened polis, without suggesting that it is ever possible that the central part of the polis, its male defenders, could be abandoned to such terror. The negative has, as so often, drifted to the female, so that extreme fear could be expressed, without deconstructing the notion of manly virtues, and thus threatening official ideology." Thalmann 1978: 102 takes a broader view of the Chorus's role with regard to the city: "[t]heir reactions to

The Chorus, however, goes one step further than expressing fear of the Argives. Their ode appears calculated to have a jarring effect on the audience (cf. Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 61). It is marked by sounds of the Argives, their shouts (89), the rattling and squeaking of their horses' bits and chariots (122-4, 151, 153), the clangs and clashing of their shields and spears (100, 155, 161), and the crashing of their stones striking Thebes' walls (159), to which the Chorus repeatedly refer and which would presumably have been represented by musical instruments or other sound effects. The ode is also marked by the Chorus's own screeches and screams (150-1, 158). It would have been an aural assault on spectators. And these sounds would doubtless have been punctuated by erratic movements on the part of the Chorus. A number of spectators would have been unnerved by the Chorus's performance, and the overall effect may have been imparting some of the Chorus's agitation and confusion to the audience. As a result, spectators could have been overwhelmed by the performance and felt some distaste for the shrieking women on stage.

III.2 The Chorus and the Gods

In addition to their demeanor and response to the invaders, the Chorus' conception of the gods is also markedly different from that of Eteocles.[301] Eteocles offers prayers to individual gods, but exhibits a more abstract conception of the divine in practice. The Chorus, perhaps under the influence of gods' images that they are supplicating (95-6, 98-9, 101-3), addresses fully embodied, anthropomorphic deities who

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the events of the play not only are those of young girls but also stand for the effects of those events on the entire city."

[301] See Brown 1977: 300-6, Stehle 2005: 101-22, and Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 53-74 for discussions of the opposition between Eteocles' and the Chorus' religious views.

have individual identities and personal stakes in human affairs. The Chorus imagines the gods in the guise familiar from traditional iconography (134, 150), uses their epithets (149-50, 152, 146), and shows an awareness of their stories and spheres of influence (105, 116, 141). These are no abstract gods. The Chorus begs the gods to be present (ἴτε, 108; σε…πελαζόμεθα, 144-5) and begs for their direct intervention: they ask the gods to avert evil (κακόν ἀλεύσατε, 88-9), to ward off destruction (ἄρηξον…ἄλωσιν, 119; 179), to save the city (ῥυσίπολις γενοῦ, 129), and to guard it (πόλιν…φύλαξον, 135-6). The Chorus imagines a personal relationship between gods and humans. They refer to gods as "beloved" (φίλοι, 174; cf. 176, 180), a word "seldom used of gods in tragedy" and only to indicate "a peculiarly intimate relation" to a god (Hutchinson 1985: 73).[302] They refer specifically to Ares and Aphrodite's personal connection to the city of Thebes[303] and ask that the gods not "betray" (προδίδωμι) the city (169-70), a term that implies a personal obligation to the city.[304] The Chorus repeatedly prays for the gods to "care about" (μέλομαι) and be mindful of the "beloved" rites and sacrifices that the city has made (177, 178; 181).

The Chorus's view of the gods is presented in the context of the Chorus's unappealing presentation, and it does not accord with the views of Eteocles, but there appears to be nothing intrinsically wrong with the Chorus's view. Eteocles' views may have seemed in keeping with current thinking to some and excessively modern to others.

[302] Stehle 2005: 108 suggests that in this case the Chorus "may use popular language." Benardete 1967: 24 attempts to find a shift from the Chorus's "loving" gods in the parodos to gods who are "no longer loving" in the first stasimon.
[303] Ares and Aphrodite are traditionally the parents of Harmonia, wife of Cadmus, the traditional founder of the city.
[304] At *Supp*. 420, the Danaids use similar language when they address Pelasgus, a human being in their presence.

The Chorus's conception of the divine is traditional, even old-fashioned. Many of the elements in the ode, such as the use of epithets, requests for the gods' presence, and reminder of personal connections and past favors, would have been familiar from traditional hymns. The Chorus's view of the gods would also have been familiar to some from literature: their conception of anthropomorphic gods who affect and can be affected deeply by human affairs is close to Iliadic,[305] and it is possible that it conformed more closely to the way in which the gods were depicted on the tragic stage. In addition to representing traditional views in the face of modern ones, some spectators may have judged that the Chorus also presents a specifically female view of the gods, which, given women's involvement in religious ritual and exclusion from public debates in Athens, might tend to be more conventional.[306] The Chorus's supplicationg of the gods and the lament-like aspect of their prayer were primarily female forms of expression.[307] The Chorus's appeal to gods who intervene directly in human affairs may also be

[305] This may be no accident and may be an intentional allusion to the gods of Homer. The Chorus's supplication of the statues and prayer for the safety of their city resembles the Trojan women's appeal to the statue of Athena in *Iliad* 6. Hutchinson 1985: 89 notes "the "conspicuous use of Homeric phrasing" in the chorus's next ode, and Aeschylus may have intentionally drawn parallels between the women of Thebes and Troy. Members of the audience who perceive the resemblance may recall Troy's desperation when this mission was undertaken; see Foley 2001: 46-7. The futility of Troy's appeal to the god's and the fact that the Trojan women suffered the fate of captured women feared by the Theban chorus may heighten the audience's estimation of the threat facing Thebes. The situation may also resemble the less distant and more personal experience of Athens in the Persian War, to which, I argue, Aeschylus explicitly alludes in the Shield scene.

[306] See in particular Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 53, 65. Brown 1977: 301 considers the Chorus's "intuitive religious feeling" one of its "essentially feminine qualities." Cf. Brown 1977: 305.

[307] Foley 2001: 87-88 points out that women supplicate more often than men in tragedy and that "men in tragedy find it humiliating to have recourse to suppliancy." Extant examples of approaches to the gods such as *Iliad* 6 and Aeschylus' *Suppliants* are restricted to women, but we cannot be certain that fifth-century Athenians would immediately associate such behavior with women (cf. vase paintings of men dancing around statue of Dionysus). Both the content and form of the ode resemble a lament. Cf. Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 64 "[i]n their address to the gods the women use interjections which are close to lament, such as ἰώ ἰώ (86-7) or φεῦ φεῦ." According to McClure 1999: 40, "[a]s much recent work on the subject has convincingly shown, the predominant, although not exclusive, speech genre assigned to female characters in both archaic and classical literature is lamentation." McClure also discusses the differences between men's ritual lamentation and women's ritual lamentation, whose lamentation includes the use of "interjectional cries" such as appear in the first odes of the chorus (pp. 42-5).

understandable in light of the limited role which they are given in the physical defense of the city (Jackson 1988: 293, Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 62).

So, individual spectators might have favored either Eteocles' viewpoint or the Chorus's based on their personal beliefs and experiences in life and in the theater,[308] but it is likely that "both Eteocles and the Chorus adopt essentially natural positions with which any Greek might on occasion agree" (Brown 1977: 301).[309] Nevertheless, because the play places the traditional viewpoint in the mouths of scared, out-of-control young women and juxtaposes it with the viewpoint of the man who is the city's best hope for salvation, some spectators may have been tempted to conclude, at least for the purposes of the play, that the Chorus's view of the gods is irrational and superstitious.[310] Again, the allegiance invited for Eteocles' position rests on an unstable basis.

IV The General and the Women

On the surface, the encounter between Eteocles and the Chorus takes another step in portraying Eteocles as a true man of the polis and upholder of the values of the polis, an ideal male citizen whom spectators could both identify with and admire. The Chorus's behavior in the parodos provides Eteocles the opportunity to display his authority, rationality, courage in the face of danger, and devotion to the city. The contrast offered by the desperate and terrified chorus of young women throws his positive

[308] This may also have skewed along class lines, based on who had more free time and access to current debates.
[309] Brown 1977: 300 points out that "a difference need not imply a conflict…."
[310] Cf. the view of Golden 1964: 83, who seems to have been convinced that the Chorus's views are not intended to be taken seriously because of the way that they are presented: "[u]nder these circumstances we cannot be meant to take as serious and perceptive insights into the inner workings of the plot of the *Seven*, the thoughts of this band of women whose minds are distraught by a near frenzy of fear." See also Kirkwood 1969: 21.

qualities into greater relief.[311] Their behavior also gives Eteocles the chance to ally himself to traditional male values. Eteocles repeatedly reminds the Chorus of customary divisions between men's and women's roles, shows his support for the staples of traditional *polis* religion, and attempts to point the women toward more productive forms of religious expression. At the same time, the combination of practical action and outward devotion that he promotes in opposition to the Chorus's blind devotion to the gods is likely to have appealed to many spectators on the grounds that it was more in keeping with their own experiences.

At the same time, the scene raises some issues regarding Eteocles. Although his misogyny, like his other views, was traditional, it may have reminded some spectators of his troubled past. The scene's increasingly sympathetic portrait of the Chorus may also have made spectators uncomfortable with Eteocles' harsh treatment of them. Eteocles' view of the gods, though appealing in its rationality, may once again have worried some spectators. Although he seems to achieve a victory over the Chorus, it is not entirely clear that his position is the superior one. Thus, while a majority of spectators are likely to have found themselves approving the way in which Eteocles handles the situation with the Chorus, their allegiance to him may nonetheless have become somewhat tentative and open to the influence of new developments as they came.

[311] Cf. Hutchinson 1985: 74: "To the excess of the women's terror…Eteocles opposes a virile self-mastery, resolution, and acceptance of fate." Rosenmeyer 1963: 17, also describes the scene in terms of the opposition between Eteocles' reason and the Chorus's "emotions and their violent fancies." See also Finley 1955: 243 and Zeitlin 1990: 110. With regard to the comparison between men and women, Roisman 2005: 8-9, 110 notes that in oratory (with which he is primarily concerned) "[m]en were rarely compared or contrasted with women," although he cites some examples. According to Roisman, orators more often showed how men failed to meet the standard set for them as men.

IV.1 THE MAN FOR THE JOB

Eteocles is faced with a practical problem in this scene. The Chorus's screams and desperate prayers are unnerving the Theban soldiers.[312] Eteocles cannot, and does not, allow this to happen. The text makes it clear that some kind of intervention is necessary. If, as I have suggested, most spectators found the Chorus's behavior in the parodos distasteful, they are likely to have recognized the effect that such a display could have on the defending soldiers' morale and thus appreciated that Eteocles needed to intervene.[313] When they saw Eteocles failing to succumb to the Chorus's anxieties, reasoning with the Chorus, looking out for his men's welfare, and taking firm control of the situation, most spectators would readily conclude that Eteocles is the right man for the job: a capable, dependable leader, doing what he can to defend his city. [314]

In addition to demonstrating personal qualities which spectators would have approved of, Eteocles also aligns himself with Greek, and specifically Athenian, ideology with regard to the proper role of women.[315] When he is unable to convince the Chorus to stop screaming by pointing out the damage they are doing, he attempts to show them that they are ignoring the traditional divisions between the sexes. Eteocles wants the women

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[312] Brown 1977: 301 may be right to suggest that "since no one contradicts this statement we must take it as factually true."

[313] Critics generally agree that Eteocles is justified in his attempts to stop the women. Cf. Podlecki 1966: 28, Kirkwood 1969: 18, Cameron 1970: 99-100, Gagarin 1976: 155, Jackson 1988: 290. Caldwell 1973: 201 observes that "[i]n the editions of Verrall and Tucker, Eteocles' behavior is apparently so appropriate to the situation that it is passed over without any special notice."

[314] See Hutchinson (1985), 74 for Eteocles' "acceptance of fate."

[315] Foley 2001: 48 notes that Eteocles' treatment of the Chorus may reflect "the same Athenian attitude to uncontrolled behavior by women in a public context expressed in the sixth-century and later funerary legislation." Cf. also Zeitlin 1990: 109: "The male is expected to take his place in the central space of the city in the spheres of public action and to take up positions of authority and leadership in both war and politics. While the *oikos*, the household, is also in his charge and belongs to him in his roles as father and husband, Aeschylean drama, as indeed all tragedy, as in fact the social standards ordain, situates him outside and reserves the interior domestic space for the woman. What this spatial restriction means is that the female is generally out of place when she comes outside, whether our of the house or on the stage."

to be silent (232, 236-8, 246, 250, 262), to stay at home (200-1, 232) and leave τἄξωθεν, "outside things," and the oracles and sacrifices that precede battle to men (200-1; 230-1),[316] and, above all, to be obedient (224-5). In regard to Eteocles' desire for silence, one thinks of Pericles' advice to the women of Athens at the end of the Funeral Oration (Thuc. 2.45.2).[317] Nothing about these requests (or commands) would have seemed out of the ordinary to most Athenians. Even if some believed this to be an improper way for women in society to behave, little in Eteocles' aims for the women would strike most as inappropriate or absolutely contradictory to their own views. If the Chorus members are in fact young unattended women rather than respectable matrons, Eteocles' behavior would be even more acceptable since appears to uphold traditional virtues.

One of Eteocles' measures would, however, have stood out to spectators. Unlike his other positions, many spectators would have considered Eteocles' threat to have stoned *anyone* who disobeys him (196-9) as excessively harsh and ill-befitting a good leader.[318] Of course some in the audience will have supposed that Eteocles is simply overstating his case in order to get through to the Chorus or dismissed it as a product of Eteocles' overexcited state. After all, he does not have the Chorus executed when they continue to cry out, but rather attempts to talk them down. Yet some spectators may have

[316] There is some disagreement as to whether spectators would agree with Eteocles' assertion. Gagarin 1976: 156 suggests that "[s]acrificing in the city on behalf of the army…is one activity that, in Aeschylus, is a prerogative of women" and that "Eteocles' denial of that prerogative would surely be seen as unwarranted." Foley 2001: 47 n.96 notes that Eteocles is "only concerned with sacrifices before battle, which will determine whether or not military action is approved by the gods." In this case, the lack of a role for women is understandable given that, in most cases, women would not be present on the battlefield to carry them out (cf. the Argives' sacrifices at 379). See Price 1999: 1 and Pritchett 1971: 109-15 for a general account of the Greek practice of sacrifice and divination before battle.

[317] See Hardwick 1993: 147-8 for a review of other interpretations of Pericles' advice to Athenian women and for the suggestion that it is in fact directed at upper-class and "crypto-oligarchic" men. See, more generally, Bosworth 2000: 2-3.

[318] Cf. Fehling 1974: 60 n.246, cited at Hutchinson 1985: 77.

concluded from tone of the threat and his equally harsh denunciations of the Chorus that Eteocles meant the threat sincerely, at least at the moment. Rosivach notes that "in *Eumenides* stoning is grouped together with decapitation, the tearing out of eyes, impalement, and other loathsome forms of punishment suitable to the unreformed Furies" (Rosivach 1987: 242), and some spectators might have been repulsed by the very suggestion. Rosivach argues that Attic drama portrays stoning "either as the appropriate punishment to be meted out *to* a traitor, or as an appropriate punishment to be meted out *by* a traitor or villain" (1987: 242).[319] If this was the prevailing view in the audience, even those spectators who took the threat seriously might come to different conclusions about its significance. Depending on which party they supported, spectators might conclude that Eteocles is branding those who would disobey him, including the Chorus, as traitors or that Eteocles is exhibiting a trait traditionally associated with stage villains.

IV.2 Eteocles' Misogyny

It is not Eteocles' actions or his viewpoints so much as his editorializing that have garnered him charges of misogyny from modern critics.[320] Eteocles goes on at some length in this scene about how much he dislikes the women before him and women in general. He calls the Chorus θρέμματ' οὐκ ἀνασχετά (182), "unbearable creatures"; he considers the Chorus's behavior typical of all women, complaining that one cannot live with women's overconfidence when they are fairing well while there is no greater evil for

[319] Rosivach suggests that Eteocles' threat reflects a sanitized account of the stoning of Lycides in 479 preserved in Lycurgus 122, the only stoning at Athens in recent memory.
[320] Caldwell 1973 is most notable among them. See also Foley 19: 46 n.91, who discusses other proponents of "the psychological view" of Eteocles' misogyny. Patzer 1958: 103 argues that Eteocles' excessively brutal treatment of the Chorus reveals that he is not simply trying to defend his city. According to Patzer, Eteocles believes that, as a result of his father's curse, his fate is intertwined with that of the city, and "the least problem in strategy could have cataclysmic results." See above.

the home or the city when they are afraid (189-90, 195); and he prays never to live with a member of the "female race," not in bad times nor in good (187-8, cf. 256).

For some spectators, Eteocles' extreme treatment of the Chorus may have seemed entirely understandable and even sympathetic under the circumstances. There is a well-established tradition of misogyny in Greek literature.[321] Brown suggests that "[s]uch an attack would no doubt seem less strange to a Greek audience brought up on Hesiod and Semonides than it at first sight does to us" (1977: 303); Hutchinson concludes in light of the tradition that "Eteocles' harsh invective is by no means exceptional" (1985: 75); Caldwell goes one step further and argues that Eteocles "typifies the social misogyny of the Greek male" (1973: 214).[322] Spectators may have felt that if anything warranted a response of this kind, the Chorus's behavior in the parodos definitely would. Eteocles' extreme misogyny may even have actively invited spectators' allegiance to him. By clearly distinguishing his behavior from the Chorus's and denouncing them specifically as women, Eteocles forces spectators to choose sides and to appreciate that Eteocles is a representative of the masculine values of the city. Along these lines, Eteocles' suggestion that the Chorus's actions are σωφρόνων μισήματα, "objects of hatred to temperate men," can be understood as a kind of argument to spectators: any self-possessed man would reject the Chorus and accept Eteocles' position.

At the same time, misogyny of this sort is not an entirely unmarked characteristic in fifth-century Athenian drama. Hippolytus, for example, whose views at *Hippolytus* 616-9 are often cited in support of the traditional nature of misogyny (cf. Brown 1977:

[321] See Hutchnson 1985: 75 and Brown 1977: 303. See also Loraux 1993: 72-3 for the tradition of misogyny in Greek society.
[322] See also Vidal-Naquet 1988: 280.

303, Loraux 1993: 72-3, and Hutchinson 1985: 75), is not an unambiguously sympathetic figure in the play, and has, after all, invited the wrath of Aphrodite through his actions. Similarly, Jason, whose speech at *Med*ea 573ff. Brown cites as evidence of conventional misogyny (1977: 303), is hardly a paragon of manly virtue. Euripides may in fact give Jason these lines to undercut Jason's position. One might also note *Hecuba* 1181-5, where Polymestor denounces womankind, and the Chorus (of women) immediately rebukes him for over-generalizing. Thus, Eteocles' misogyny would, despite being conventional, have stood out to some spectators nonetheless.

Above all, Eteocles' desire never "to share his *oikos*" with a woman would have attracted attention, suggesting that Eteocles is not an archetypal representative of traditional Greek manhood. It may be useful to compare Orestes' similarly phrased exclamation after a description of his mother and her crimes: "I hope that such a woman never shares my *oikos*; I would rather die childless at the hands of the gods" (τοιάδ' ἐμοὶ ξύνοικος ἐν δομοισι μὴ γένοιτ'· ὀλοίμην πρόσθεν ἐκ θεῶν ἄπαις, 1006-7).[323] Unlike Eteocles, Orestes only rejects women like his mother (τοιάδε), and he suggests that his aversion to such women is so great that *anything* would be preferable, even dying childless.[324] In the *Seven*, Eteocles appears to embrace this unthinkable fate. He rejects all women, and, by extension, any hope of a conventional family (cf. Zeitlin 1990: 107).

The rejection of wife and offspring alone could have suggests that there is something wrong with Eteocles and driven Aeschylus' spectators away from him. More specifically, Eteocles' intense aversion to women and family may have pointed back to

[323] See Lloyd-Jones 1961 on the authenticity of these lines.
[324] Cf. Garvie 1986: 330: Orestes is "expressing rhetorically the strength of his feelings about his mother; he would rather die childless—for any Greek a dreadful fate (cf. [*Cho.*] 503-7 n.)—than have a wife like her."

Eteocles' past (Winnington-Ingram 1983: 46, cf. Dawson 1970: 48) or simply reminded spectators that Eteocles is the product of an incestuous union and, perhaps for that reason, uncomfortable with the idea of having children himself.[325] The Chorus's address to Eteocles as "child of Oedipus" (203) highlights this idea. Given that the actual measures Eteocles takes in dealing with the Chorus are likely to have appeared more or less appropriate to spectators, it is unlikely that this nod to his troubled past would entirely undermine any respect they might have for him as a leader. It might, however, raise questions about his motives and cause spectators' sympathies to shift away somewhat from Eteocles and perhaps toward his victims, the Chorus.

IV.2 A Religious Disagreement

Religious concerns are at issue in Eteocles' attack on the Chorus. Underlying their positions is a disagreement, already implicit in their initial addresses to the gods, about the role of the gods in human affairs and how best to appeal to them. Eteocles' and the Chorus's respective views are likely to have affected spectators' allegiance to them. As with his views on the proper role of women, Eteocles' behavior, if not his beliefs, align him with prevailing notions regarding proper religious practice. An attentive spectator might conclude that the Chorus's views are not be the problem, that the conflict is more an issue of outward expression than inward belief.

[325] Interestingly, if the end of Laius' line was a necessary element to ensure the safety of Thebes, the suggestion that Eteocles will not have children may have led some spectators to conclude that Thebes' safety can be achieved in a way other than the mutual slaughter of the brothers.

Critics have noted that Eteocles' approach to religion is in keeping with the dominant religious practices of the Greek *polis*,[326] and his position is likely to have appealed to spectators on this basis. And Eteocles certainly conveys the impression that his views are more in keeping with Greek convention. He advises the Chorus to sing an ululation, which, as he reminds them, accompanies sacrifices in accordance with Ἑλληνικὸν νόμισμα, "Greek custom" (267-69).[327] Twice he answers the Chorus with *logoi* that may have been, and are certainly implied to be, traditional (218, 225) (Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 61).[328] Eteocles also emphasizes the need for sacrifice, an integral and familiar aspect of *polis* religion.

Eteocles' beliefs continue to skirt the line between practicality and outright rejection of the Chorus's traditional vision of the gods, but may have appealed to spectators because of their familiarity. Eteocles' acknowledgement of the fickleness of the gods (218), his emphasis on the need for human action (248), and his view that the gods should be thought of as allies rather than saviors (266) are hardly controversial and may have rung true for many in Aeschylus' audience. Unlike the Chorus's view,

[326] Vernant 1988: 40 suggests that Eteocles' view "is both virile and civic." Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 65 offers a more decisive division between Eteocles and the Chorus's religious views, dividing their "religiosity" into "normative" and "marginal"; their "relation to the gods" into "reciprocity" and "supplication"; their "ritual form" into "prayer εὐχή) + sacrifice" and "supplication + λιτή"; their effect on *polis*" into "courage" and "fear"; their "domain" into "public (outside)" and "private (inside)" their "relation to fear" into "control" and "expression"; and their "response to danger" into "exhortation" and lament. In some instances, these distinctions seem somewhat overstated. See below. Rosenmeyer 1963: 22 argues that Eteocles' views are not representative of polis religion and that his "attack on orgiastic cult practices borders on downright secularity (217)…"

[327] Eteocles literally tells them to ὀλολθγμὸν παιώνισον, "to sing a ululation as a paean." Some scholars have been troubled by the fact that ululations are traditionally sung by women, men generally sing paeans. See, in particular Vidal-Naquet 1988: 281, who is also bothered by the fact that there does not seem to be a sacrifice for the ululation to accompany. According to Foley 2001: 47, "[t]he anomalous use of terminology here would suggest that Aeschylus is attempting to characterize Eteocles as extreme in his attitudes toward the women. See, however, Hutchinson 1985: 87, who argues that Eteocles is not advising a gender effacing about-face, but rather that he "separates the cry from the women's wild ululation."

[328] Both Eteocles and the Chorus's views would have been familiar to audiences, but Eteocles explicitly asserts the traditional nature of his views (this is especially notably in the case of his genealogy of Persuasion and Success, which may very well be Aeschylus' invention).

Eteocles' position acknowledges the vital role that humans play in determining matters and thus leave room for masculine bravery in war. This perspective is also likely to have conformed more closely to spectators' own experiences in warfare, in which the outcome was sometimes successful, sometimes not, and where the work of men was in much greater evidence than the direct intervention of the gods. Eteocles' combination of showing respect for the gods through traditional rituals while attending to every possible issue on the ground would have been familiar to everyone in the audience. Nevertheless, there may be room for spectators to doubt his commitment to the gods. Some spectators might have appreciated as the height of rationality Eteocles' insistence that the force of fate, rather than anthropomorphic gods, has determined what will happen, his assertion that the Chorus will not avert fate with lamentation and useless cries (279-81), and his rejection of the Chorus's prayer that Zeus will cast a thunderbolt (255, 256). Yet others may have seen these positions as a rejection of the Chorus's sincere, if slightly exaggerated, appeal to the gods (cf. Rosenmeyer 1963: 22). Eteocles' dismissal of the Chorus's prayer for a thunderbolt may have seemed even more striking when spectators hear Eteocles himself predicting that a thunderbolt will strike Capaneus in the next scene (444-5).[329]

As before, the Chorus's view of the gods in this scene are, in and of themselves, above reproach. They assert that the gods are all-powerful, that they can save those in trouble, and that they have been responsible for the city's safety thus far. As the Chorus says, and as Eteocles is willing to concede, τίς τάδε νέμεσις στυγεῖ; (235), "what

[329] Spectators would certainly think twice if the story that Zeus did in fact strike down Capaneus was already in existence. Sources for this story, however, are late (cf. S. *Ant*. 127-37 and E. *Phoen*. 1172-86) and may have been derived from Aeschylus' account.

resentment opposes these things?" Yet Eteocles appears to score a victory on religious grounds, subtly asserting throughout the scene that he has a superior understanding of the religious implications of the Chorus's actions. He rebukes the Chorus for their behavior, telling them not to call upon the gods imprudently (223), he warns them not to wail over the corpses of the Thebans and thereby feed Ares (242-4), and, finally, when the Chorus tells him that they are "wretched, just like men whose city is captured" (257), he reproaches them for speaking ill-omened words while touching the images of the gods (258). This last complaint rings true for the Chorus, who eventually acquiesce to Eteocles' wishes as a result of it. In this way, the play gives Eteocles the appearance of a victory on religious grounds without demonstrating the unassailable superiority of his position.[330] This may have prevented spectators from dismissing the Chorus and would have allowed spectators' opinion of them to be rehabilitated as the play progresses. In the end, however, it is Eteocles' association with masculine cleverness,[331] bravery, authority, and tradition and the Chorus's association with feminine terror and desperation that are likely to have inclined spectators toward Eteocles' position.

[330] The conflict between Eteocles and the Chorus in this scene is largely a product of Eteocles' trying to stop the Chorus's loud and disturbing outbursts. As far as religious beliefs go, Eteocles and the Chorus seem to agree on more than they disagree. Both Eteocles and the Chorus acknowledge the importance of showing respect for the gods (235; 236) and hope to influence them, the Chorus through supplication and direct prayers for assistance, Eteocles through less direct prayers and promises of sacrifices and offerings. Both Eteocles and the Chorus seem to believe that matters are ultimately out of their hands. Eteocles insists that mortals must do what they can to defend themselves but acknowledges that fate (281) and the gods (218) will not always be on their side. Admittedly, the Chorus is much more invested in trying to sway the gods. Without explicitly disputing the need for human action, the Chorus insists that the gods are all-powerful and capable of influencing matters decisively one way or the other. Nevertheless, they seem to understand (albeit to their horror) that the gods may not side with them (cf. 219-22, 251).

[331] Hutchinson 1985: xxxv suggests that "[h]is whole part in the stichomythia shows more wit and point than is usual in Aeschylean stichomythiae of this type."

IV.4 The Chorus's Perspective

Eteocles' complaints against the Chorus in this scene paint them as desperate, terrified women who struggle against the conventional roles set out for women and who show a lack of understanding on how best to approach the gods. In other words, they are the antithesis of the Greek masculine ideal, whom no Greek man would want to emulate. Yet, while the Chorus will continue to cry out at the sounds of Argives, much to Eteocles' dismay, they do so much less frequently than they did before and offer a reasonable explanation for their actions. This may have won them sympathy from some of Aeschylus' spectators in spite of Eteocles' comments. The parodos was an alternation of screams and desperate prayers. Here, the Chorus looks back at the parodos and explains to Eteocles and to spectators what happened: they were frightened by the sounds of the chariots and the horses' bits (203-7). Putting their faith in the gods, they rushed to their images and supplicated them. When they heard the enemy's stones striking the gates, they rose up and prayed to the gods that they might extend their protection to the city (211-215; 239-41). Although Eteocles clearly does not approve of their decision, the Chorus continues to justify their actions to him and to spectators as the scene goes on, specifically their decision to supplicate the gods.

The Chorus's behavior in this scene reveals a more sympathetic group than the one that appeared in the parodos. Even if spectators disagree with their reasoning regarding the best way to approach the gods and side with Eteocles, the rationality that the Chorus demonstrates offers a positive contrast to their performance in the parodos. The revelation that the Chorus, though desperate, was not entirely unthinking in its approach to the gods is also likely to have improved many spectators opinion of them.

The insight that the Chorus offers into their thought process also marks the play's first tentative step toward expanding spectators' alignment. Before now, the Argive invasion has been presented solely from the perspective of Eteocles. The threat the Argives pose, their affect upon the Thebans, their posting of leaders at the gates, were all issues for Eteocles to handle. The parodos gave spectators a new perspective on the invasion, but offered very little in the presentation of the Chorus that would appeal to spectators' sympathies. At best, as Eteocles suggests in his response to them, the Chorus in the parodos presents yet another problem for Eteocles to deal with. The Chorus's explanation of their actions in this scene suggests that they too are attempting to do their part to help the city and allows spectators to think of them as potentially sympathetic characters rather than as mere obstacles in the way of the hero.

V The Chorus and the City

The Chorus does not seem to internalize Eteocles' advice to them. Though they initially suggest that they will take Eteocles seriously (μέλει, 287), they immediately succumb to fear. They spend the rest of the ode imagining in great detail what will become of them and of Thebes should the city be captured and offering desperate prayers to the gods for salvation "with piercing prayers of lamentation" (ὀξυγόοις λιταῖσιν, 320). Yet the Chorus's focus not only on their own concerns, but also on those of the other inhabitants of Thebes may continue the process of expanding spectators' alignment beyond Eteocles alone.

V.1 UNDERMINING ETEOCLES?

Critics have wondered whether the Chorus's resumption of their behavior before Eteocles' intervention represents a challenge to Eteocles' authority, and there may be some subtle alterations in the Chorus's approach as a result of Eteocles' input. The Chorus's appeal to the gods may be less personal, for instance; although the Chorus members pray for the direct intervention of the gods,[332] they no longer refer to the gods as their φίλοι (Bernadete 1967: 24). But in other respects the Chorus does not appear to heed Eteocles' commands.[333] It is possible that the Chorus has moved outside of the hearing of the Theban defenders, and thus has obeyed Eteocles' most pressing demand. Benardete suggests that the Chorus's failure to name specific gods in this ode as they did in the parodos indicates that they have moved away from the statues of the gods (1967: 24), and this could also indicate a move away from the soldiers. Their fears of impending danger could also have been less problematic in light of their no longer touching the gods' statues. That Eteocles does not rebuke them for their behavior at the beginning of the following scene would have suggested that he either did not hear the ode or did not find it objectionable.[334] With this in mind, we might conclude that the ode was simply intended to keep tensions high by reinforcing the threat posed to the city in spite of the measures Eteocles was taking to address them. Yet some spectators may nevertheless have felt that the Chorus's failure to incorporate Eteocles' suggestions into their ode

[332] The Chorus ask the gods what land better than Thebes will they find if they give it over to its enemies (304-11) and ask the gods to implant cowardice in the Argives, win glory for the citizens, and be saviors of the city (312-18).
[333] Benardete 1967: 22 notes that there is no mention of the sacrifice nor ululation for which Eteocles called.
[334] Hutchinson 1985: 75 notes that actors' acknowledging choral odes is in fact the exception rather than the rule.

constituted a challenge to Eteocles' authority and pointed to a troubling lack of control on his part.

V.2 The Interests of the City

The Chorus certainly focus on what might befall them personally (cf. 297). They imagine women like themselves being dragged out of their homes by their hair like animals (326-28), having their clothes torn (328-9), being raped before they come of age (333-35), and becoming sex-slaves to their enemies (363-8), a fate which they consider worse than death (336-7). But their account is also notable for its inclusiveness. They mention the fates of women old and young (326-7), of mothers and babies (348-50), of men captured, murdered, or burned (340-1, 346-7), of produce spilled carelessly (357-362). They also speak more broadly of the city in general, when it is conquered, sacked, and enslaved (321-5, 338-39).

In this way, the city and its inhabitants, including the Chorus, are introduced as an object of interest that is not entirely subordinated to the interests of Eteocles. Spectators may still have been thinking about what Eteocles needs to do to ensure a victory, but they may also have begun to feel sympathy for the city as a potential victim of the Argive attack and, ultimately, of Eteocles' and Polyneices' dispute. For the moment, Eteocles' and the city's fates appear to be intertwined. Thus, the Chorus's fear for the city makes it clear just how necessary victory is for Thebes, and, insofar as Eteocles is the city's defender, it may have directed spectators to favor his endeavors to an even greater extent (Rosenmeyer 1963: 12) and perhaps even to forgive his overzealousness as understandable given the price of failure. Yet we can also see spectators' increased

alignment with the interests of the Chorus and the city as a crucial step in preparing them for subsequent developments in the play when Eteocles' and the city's concerns may no longer be one and the same. As questions arise regarding the relationship between Eteocles and the city, specifically, the threat that the two brothers pose to the city, spectators may begin to scrutinize whether Eteocles is still acting in the best interests of the city.

VI The First Five Gates: Foreign Invaders and Local Heroes

If Eteocles' encounter with the Chorus strongly suggests that Eteocles is an admirable leader who is doing everything he can to save his city, but leaves some room for doubt, the account of the Argive and Theban leaders in this scene removes all possibility of doubt as to whom they should be rooting for. The Scout presents the Argives as boastful, impious, almost inhuman monsters, while Eteocles presents the Thebans as capable and pious defenders of their city. Further resemblances drawn between the Argives and the Persian invaders of 480 as well as between the Thebans and the Athenians would likely strengthen many spectators' support for Thebes. The emphasis placed on the descriptions of the Argives' shields and the use of reported speech throughout the scene give the impression that the accounts of Eteocles and the Scout, which might otherwise be considered biased, are in fact objective truth.[335]

Spectators' view of Eteocles' actions may, however, begin to shift at the fifth gate. Parthenopaeus is no less savage or impious than the other Argives, but his presence introduces themes of brotherhood, internecine slaughter, and calls attention to the deeds

[335] See Barrett 2002 30-1 on the potential subjectivity of the messenger (in this case the Scout), though he focuses on the messenger in the *Persians*.

of Oedipus. In this way, spectators would be reminded of where the struggle between the two forces is eventually heading and, as a result, begun to scrutinize Eteocles' actions more closely.

VI.1 The Argives

The first five Argives lack any redeeming qualities, are uniformly distasteful, and seem calculated to inspire antipathy.[336] The description of the Argives is overflowing with negative signifiers. The sheer number of them leaves little room for spectators to doubt the true nature of the Argives. From the outset, the Argives' expedition is problematic. Their sacrifices do not bode well (379), the significance of which would not have escaped most spectators, but the Argives are nonetheless eager to proceed with the attack (cf. 380-3). Spectators also learn of internal squabbling between two Argive leaders, Tydeus and Amphiaraus.

The Argives themselves are consistently portrayed as arrogant and impious. Tydeus' equipment and shield are over-boastful (391, 404), Capaneus is a boastful man (425, 436), Eteoclos and Parthenopaeus are both said to have their boasts on their shields (473, 538), and, regarding Hippomedon, it is said that Terror boasts at the gate (500).[337] The Chorus describes the Argives speaking "over-boastfully" against the city (ὑπέραυχα βάζουσιν, 483). Closely tied to their boasting is the Argives' greatest crime, impiety. Their challenges to the gods are as blatant as they are ill-advised. Capaneus' boasts are

[336] Parthenopaeus' beauty is perhaps an exception, but can be counted against him. Cf. Rosenmeyer 1963: 30: "[i]n short, Parthenopaeus is an angelic miscreant; charming without and rotten within, he exhibits a gross disparity between character and looks." See Thalmann 1978: 45 for other issues regarding the depiction of Parthenopaeus.

[337] Cf. Hutchinson 1985: 109, who observes that "the stem κομπ- is used again and again with relation to the Argives (404, 425, 436, 473, 480, 500, 538, 551, 554, 794). The device builds up a strong impression of their extreme self-confidence and pride which they express in word and symbol."

οὐ κατ᾽ ἄνθρωπον (425), "not in keeping with his humanity"; he says that he will sack the city whether or not Zeus allows him and, making light of the thunderbolt, claims that it will not stop him (427-31). On Eteoclos' shield, next to the soldier scaling the wall, it is written that Ares could not cast him off the wall (466-69). Hippomedon's shield aligns himself with Typhon, the ancient enemy of Zeus and the other gods (491-94). Parthenopaeus swears that he reveres his spear more than god (529-30).

The Argives are portrayed as either inhuman, insane, or both. Tydeus growls (βρέμει, 378), screams like a snake (381), and strains to begin fighting like a horse struggling against its bridle (393). Capaneus is a γίγας (424), a "giant," a description that not only distinguishes his size from that of other men but also identifies him with the giants who warred against the gods (cf Hutchinson 1985: 114). In addition to being animal-like (or perhaps *because* he is animal-like), Tydeus is "madly eager for battle" (μαργῶν καὶ μάχης λελιμμένος, 380), and the Chorus refers generally to the Argives' "raging mind" (μαινομένη φρήν, 484). The description of Hippomedon goes further: he is ἔνθεος Ἄρει, "inspired by Ares" and "rages for battle like a maenad, giving a fearsome look" (βακχᾶι πρὸς ἀληὴν θυιὰς ὥς, φόβον βλέπων) (497-8).

Finally, along with explicit accusations of arrogance, impiety, savagery, and madness, there are indications that the Argive leaders were intended to remind Aeschylus' spectators of the invading Persian army of 490 and 480.[338] The play's setup,

[338] A number of scholars have noted echoes of the Persian war in the *Seven*, e.g., Sheppard 1913: 77, who is seconded by Rose 1957: 176, Solmsen 1937: 207-8, Diller 1962: 46, Podlecki 1964: 30, Rosenmeyer 1963: 13-4, and Thalman 1978: 6. See also Hall 1989: 178. Cf., however, the views of Vidal-Naquet 1990: 278 who complains of scholars for whom "Thebes is simply a mask for Athens, the victor of the Persians" and of Lattimore 1958: 43 who notes that the resemblance between Thebes and Athens is not exact because Thebes actually fought alongside Persia and "was besieged by the other Greeks." I would suggest that no exact parallel is necessary to create the impression that the Argives are similar to the Persian invaders of

a city defending itself against foreign invaders who intend to enslave its inhabitants, may have been enough to suggest a resemblance to some spectators. The Chorus has already referred to the Argives as a ἑτερόφωνος στρατός (170), an "army that speaks in a foreign way," a remark that should simply refer to differences in dialect, but may have reinforced the idea that they, like the Athenians' invaders, are truly foreign (Sommerstein 2008: 169 n.25). Here, the audience gets at least one explicit nod in this direction: the muzzle of Eteoclos' horse is said to whistle in a "barbarian style" (463, βάρβαρον τρόπον). Only four of the seven Argive leaders actually hail from Argos; their varied makeup and the fact that their cause is not their own may also have reminded spectators of the Persians' heterogeneous forces.[339] Finally, the Argives' connection to slavery is repeated in this scene (253, 470-1). The resemblance between the Argives and the Persians may have added a more emotional component to many spectators' distaste for the Argives, encouraging them to identify with the Thebans and reject the Argives as men suffering from the same faults as those who drove out the Athenians and destroyed Athens.[340]

VI.2 THE THEBANS

As described by Eteocles, the Thebans are good men and admirable soldiers, who are well-suited to meet the Argive leaders in battle. Whereas the Argives are impious, the Thebans have the goodwill of Artemis and the other gods (449-50), including Pallas

480. Tucker 1908: xlvi suggests that the *Seven* is a political argument for the fortification of Athens and alludes to the burning of Athens by the Persians as an example of Athens' insufficient defenses.

[339] Polyneices is obviously Theban, Tydeus is a Calydonian, and Parthenopaeus is a metic (548, cf. 546). On the varied makeup of the Persian army, cf. *Pers*. 33-58

[340] Rosenmeyer 1963: 13 suggests that the resemblance between the Argives and the Persians would "point up the viciousness of war, and [ ] deepen the gulf between the city and the forces beyond" and achieve "a clearer drawing of the lines, a more crystalline hardening of opposites."

Onca, who hates Hippomedon's arrogance, and who will watch over them like baby-birds (501-3). Hermes has fittingly brought Hyperbius and Hippomedon together because, while Hippomedon carries Typhon on his shield, Hyperbius has Zeus (508-13), and, in this fight, the Thebans are on the side of the victors (516). Whereas Tydeus and Hippomedon are battle-crazed, Polyphontes, though αἴθων λῆμα, "blazing in his spirit," is nevertheless a "dependable guard" (φερέγγυον φρούρημα) (448-9). The Argives are arrogant and boastful; the Theban heroes are modest and emphasize actions over words. Melanippus "honors the throne of Modesty" (Αἰσχύνης θρόνον, 409-10) and hates arrogance (410); Megareus' boast is in his hands rather than upon his lips (473); and Actor, whose name suggests his penchant for action, is "without boasts," "his hand sees what is to be done," and he will stop Parthenopaeus' "tongue-without-deeds" (554-6). Whereas the Argives are effectively mercenaries in the service of Polyneices and Tydeus, many of whom hail from other cities, the men fighting for Thebes are Theban and have close ties to their city and to one another. Melanippus is "very local" (κάρτα ἐγχώριος), and Δίκη ὁμαίμων, "Justice associated with kinship" orders him to defend the "mother" who bore him, namely Thebes (415-6). If he dies, Megareus will pay back Thebes for nurturing him; if he lives, he will decorate his father's house with spoils (477-9). Family connections are evident elsewhere: Melanippos and Hyperbius are identified as the "dear" (κεδνός) sons of their fathers (407; 504); Actor and Hyperbius are brothers (555). And the Theban defenders' connection to the land goes one step further. Two of the Thebans, Melanippos and Megareus, are explicitly identified as progeny of the autochthonous Sewn Men of Thebes.[341] Given the Athenians' own claims to autochthony

[341] Hutchinson 1985: 112 does not believe that all Thebans are descended from the Spartoi and cites E. *Ph*.

and use of autochthony as a rallying cry,[342] the idea of the Thebans defending the land from which they sprang from foreign invaders may have reminded spectators once more of their own struggles in the past and increased their allegiance to the Thebans.[343]

In addition to resembling the Athenians who defended their homelands, possessing self-control, reverence for the gods, devotion to homeland and willingness to die on its behalf, and generally being the antithesis of the hateful Argives, the Thebans are also described as just (415, 418), noble (409), handsome (507-8), and brave (411, 475-6, 507-8). In short, and in contrast to the Argives, the Thebans display the cardinal values of Greek fighting men. These are admirable men defending their country against shameful and repulsive aggressors. At this stage, it would be hard for most spectators to imagine that these Thebans are not on the right side of this dispute.

VI.3 THE FIFTH GATE

Up until the account of the fifth gate, and, to some degree, even during it, Eteocles would have come off well to spectators. He demonstrates that he is a capable, dependable, and even clever leader by answering the threats posed by the Argives with well-matched Theban defenders. He certainly benefits from association with the nigh flawless Thebans in opposition to the hopelessly flawed Argives. He too appears to be on the right side of the dispute. The fifth gate, however, raises issues that may have led

942-4 in support of the assertion.

[342] See Loraux 1986 for references to autochthony in Athenian funeral orations. On Athenian autochthony in general, see Loraux 1993: 3-71.

[343] Goff 1995: 353 suggests that Theban and Athenian autochthony stand in contrast to one another: "fratricide…is the legacy from the Sown Men, whereas in Athens autochthony is a sign for democratic equality." According to Goff, the only thing they have in common is that "both versions of the city's foundation deny reproduction from the female" (n.2). This aspect of the Thebans past may also have occurred to some spectators, though the reference to the story in this play (412) is very much toned down ("the sewn men whom Ares spared").

spectators to distinguish Eteocles from his companions in a way that would be unfavorable for him.

Parthenopaeus' shield introduces the theme of internecine slaughter and civil war (Thalmann 1971: 115). On his shield he carries not only the Sphinx, who preyed upon the people of Thebes, but also, and more deviously, a Theban man, whom Parthenopaeus hopes his Theban opponents will be forced to strike (543-4). Coupled with this theme is an emphasis on brothers. Parthenopaios is stationed by the tomb of Amphion, who famously built the walls of Thebes with his brother Zethos (528),[344] and spectators are told that Actor is the brother of one of the other defenders. The combination of Thebans killing Thebans and the presence of brothers, is likely to have reminded some spectators of the meeting of Eteocles and Polyneices, which, with only two gates remaining, is fast approaching. And the contrast between Actor and Hyperbius, brothers fighting together to defend their city, and Eteocles and Polyneices, brothers who will fight and kill one another, may have led these spectators to rethink Eteocles' relationship to all of the Theban defenders, particularly with regard to their connection to family. The emphasis on the Sphinx in this passage, the monster which may have come to the city as a result of Laius' crimes (see above), which was vanquished by Oedipus, and which may in turn

[344] See Hutchinson 1985: 127. On the one hand, this reference may draw attention to the heroic past of Thebes and to the solidarity of the Theban force. Mention of the brothers may also, however, point to the coming problems and the end of the line of Oedipus, particularly in light of their troublesome fates: Amphion and Zethos did not fight one another, but both of their lines were ultimately destroyed: Zethos' wife Thebe is said to have killed his son. Amphion's line famously came to an end when Apollo and Artemis intervened to avenge his wife Niobe's slight against their mother Leto (nevermind the fact that Amphitryon was descended from one of their sons).

have been the catalyst for Oedipus' marriage to his mother, draws even more attention to Eteocles' problematic family history.[345]

Earlier, the Thebans' devotion and strong connection to their families seemed to be yet another positive aspect of the Theban defenders that tied them together. Now, family appears to be the thing that distinguishes the rest of the Thebans from Eteocles, their leader. If much of spectators' positive response to Eteocles in this scene is a function of his association with these other Thebans, a potential rift between Eteocles and his men might have forced spectators to reconsider how they view him. And the emphasis on his family troubles would do little to help their opinion of him. The Chorus's reaction to Eteocles' posting at the fifth gate may have alerted spectators to the dangers posed by the introduction of these issues: in contrast to the confidence they have showed at other gates, particularly the fourth, at the fifth gate, the Chorus once more gives way to their fear (Thalmann 1971: 115, Hutchinson 1985: 104).

VI.4 A Supportive Chorus

In spite of their apparent failure to heed Eteocles in the previous ode, the Chorus plays a much more supportive role in these proceedings that lasts through the sixth gate. They do not entirely abstain from expressing their fear (cf. 419-21, 566-7), but they consistently pray for the success of Eteocles' defenders (481-2) and the destruction of the Argive leaders (452-3), and they support Eteocles' cause (521-25). At no point does Eteocles rebuke them. Yet, with their calls for the direct intervention of the gods, the

[345] The reference to Parthenopaeus' "paying back the τροφή, "care-taking," of Argos, with its echo of the reference to Eteocles' and Polyneices' τροφή of Oedipus at line 785 (cf. also Megareus at 475), may have been intended to remind spectators of Eteocles' τροφή of his father and what he will be forced to pay for it.

sentiment of the Chorus's prayers is very similar to that of their prayers in the parodos and in their first encounter with Eteocles, which so troubled Eteocles. Granted, the Chorus is no longer shrieking in despair and Eteocles appears to have matters under control, but it may be noteworthy that when the Chorus prays for a thunderbolt to strike Capaneus (453, cf. 629-30) they are not dismissed as in the previous scene, and are in fact echoing Eteocles' own prediction that Zeus will strike Capaneus down for belittling his thunderbolts. The Chorus's traditional religion appears rather fitting in the context of the Thebans' battle against the impious Argives, and this subtle shift in the presentation of the Chorus may have redeemed them to some degree in the eyes of the audience.

VII Gates Six and Seven: Casualties of War and the Other Theban

The case against the Argives reaches a climax at the Sixth gate, when Amphiaraus, who is himself an Argive leader, condemns them and their mission, singling out Tydeus and Polyneices in particular for abuse. His presence humanizes the Argives to some degree, but his denunciation of the Argives and other factors effectively make the sixth gate an argument in Eteocles' favor. The seventh gate, however, abruptly introduces doubt with regard to his cause. Although the reputation of the other Thebans defenders remains unblemished, the description of Polyneices and Eteocles' response to it begin to emphasize the brothers' similarities rather than their differences. Both are partially to blame for these events, both cursed by their father. This development may thus have challenged spectators' allegiance to Eteocles, though without necessarily increasing their allegiance to Polyneices.

VII.1 Amphiaraus

Amphiaraus presents an argument against the Argive cause, implicitly by embodying all of the virtues that are lacking in the other Argives and explicitly by directly criticizing Tydeus, Polyneices, and their attack on Thebes. Amphiaraus also provides spectators with an admirable model of a man who knows that he has been cursed to die in the battle between Thebes and Argos yet who faces his fate bravely and honorably, upon which spectators can map the experiences of Eteocles. At the same time, the presence of a noble and good man like Amphiaraus on the side of the Argives reminds spectators that Thebes' struggle against Polyneices is not a one-sided struggle of good versus evil and that at least one good man might lose his life in the fighting.

VII.1.a The Anti-Argive

Amphiaraus underlines the moral failings of the other Argives through contrast. He is the antithesis of the other Argives, and he surpasses even the best of the Thebans in his positive qualities. According to the Scout, he is both the "wisest" and the strongest man (ἀλκὴν ἄριστος) as well as a prophet (568-9), who, in contrast to his compatriots, reveres the gods (596). He has no device on his shield because, also unlike his compatriots, he is thoughtful and does not want to appear, but rather actually to be, best (593-4; 591-2). Eteocles describes him as a σώφρων δίκαιος ἀγαθὸς εὐσεβὴς ἀνήρ μέγας προφήτης (610-1), a "thoughtful, just, good, reverent man and a great prophet" (cf. 598, 602). Amphiaraus could not be any more different from his companions. In fact, the only complaint Eteocles can muster against Amphiaraus is the evil company he keeps, a fact that Eteocles treats at some length.

The Scout also quotes directly Amphiaraus' somewhat surprising criticisms of Tydeus, Polyneices, and their expedition. Initially, Amphiaraus appears to hold Tydeus responsible for the expedition, calling him a "murderer," an "agitator of the city," "Argos' greatest instructor of evils," a "summoner of the Fury," a "servant of slaughter," and "Adrastus' advisor in these evils" (571-5). Amphiaraus' criticisms of Polyneices, though less insulting and in the form of an inducement to change, are no less damning. He draws attention to the etymology of Polyneices' name, i.e., "many-quarrels" (577-8) and tells Polyneices that neither the gods nor posterity will look fondly upon him for sacking the city of his father and native gods with a foreign army (580-83), that no cause, however valid (literally, τὶς δίκη, "what justice?") can justify "drying out your mother's fountainhead" (584-86), and that it will be impossible for the land of his father to side with him after it is captured "at your urging" (585-6). These revelations, spoken by one of the Argives no less, leave little doubt that Polyneices is in the wrong to attack Thebes (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 32, Hutchinson 1985: 133, Jackson 1988: 293). They might also have convinced most spectators to put aside any doubts they may have had about Eteocles and conclude that he is the admirable leader that he appears to be.[346] Some spectators may have noted, however, that Amphiaraus is curiously silent about the original cause of the dispute and never actually states that Eteocles is in the right.[347] In fact, Amphiaraus may even imply that Polyneices has a valid case against his brother (cf.

[346] Hutchinson 1985: 133 believes that "[t]he section guides the moral feelings of the audience" and "reveals that the expedition regarded by Polynices as just is in fact profoundly evil."
[347] Cf. Jackson 1988: 293: "Thus the audience is manoevered into a position of solidarity with Eteocles which has no secure foundation. Without any authoritative endorsement of Eteocles' cause, a bias has been created in his favour."

τὶς δίκη; Sommerstein 1996: 110-1).[348] Amphiaraus instead criticizes the particular means through which Polyneices has chosen to pursue his suit as impious and impractical and criticizes Tydeus and Adrastus for convincing the Argives to follow Polyneices on this fool's errand. The emphasis is certainly on Polyneices' guilt, but Amphiaraus' failure to choose sides in the original dispute leaves the matter open for spectators.

VII.1.B A Problematic War

The qualities that make Amphiaraus sympathetic and put the other Argive leaders to shame would have encouraged some spectators to become more ambivalent about the outcome of the war between the Thebans and the Argives. His presence on the battlefield undercuts the black and white distinctions that Eteocles and his Spy consistently make between Theban defender and Argive invader (Rosenmeyer 1963: 33, Thalmann 1978: 117). During the first five gates, the defeat of the Argives was an unproblematic proposition, none of the previous five Argive leaders being admirable or attractive in the least. Amphiaraus, in contrast, is a sympathetic character and his death will be a tragedy (cf. Lesky 1983a: 57). He is a great and noble man who is fighting on the side of the unjust Argives against his will (612), having been betrayed by his own wife at the behest of Polyneices (cf. *Od*. 11.326-7, 15.244-47). He knows that he will die (587-8) yet nevertheless invites battle (μαχώμεθα), looks forward to an honorable death (οὐκ ἄτιμον ἐλπίζω μόρον) (589), and calmly prepares for battle (εὔκηλος) (590).

[348] Patzer 1958: 107 argues that the original injustice loses importance in light of Polyneices attack on his own city.

The knowledge that a man like this will die complicates spectators' feelings about the battle.[349] A Theban victory will no longer be without consequences. Eteocles' suggestion that Amphiaraus may not even fight in the battle seems to signal that his death at the hands of a Theban would be regrettable, though other versions of the myth suggest that Amphiaraus will not in fact be killed by a Theban; he will simply be swallowed up by a fissure that appears in the land. The sense of blurring distinctions between the Thebans and Argives may have been strengthened by Eteocles' choice of defender. Unlike the defenders at the other gates, Lasthenes is not unambiguously positive. Eteocles uses the same term to describe him, ἐχθρόξενος, "stranger-hating," that he used to describe the Argives a moment earlier (621; 606). Despite its negative connotations in Greek culture, the idea of hating strangers may have a positive force when applied to Lasthenes, suggesting that he will be committed in his opposition to the foreign invaders. Yet this characteristic may have gone even further in suggesting to spectators that the struggle between the Argives and the Thebans is not quite as straightforward as it initially appeared.[350]

[349] Although the introduction of Amphiaraus initially breaks down the straightforward distinction between Theban and Argive developed at least in part by drawing parallels between the Thebans and the Athenians and the Argives and the Persians, the idea of having a noble Greek man conscripted to fight against the city against his will may in fact have made the parallels to the Persian wars, in which Greeks were forced to fight on the side of the Persians against other Greeks, even more pronounced.

[350] Hutchinson 1985: 139, 140 says that "the rights of the stranger occupy a particularly significant position in the ethics and theology of the Greeks," but that in the case of Lasthenos, "it is used in grim commendation." Hutchinson suggests that "an actual echo of that line would have little point," but it is hard to believe that the repetition of the word within 15 lines, once in reference to the Argives, once in reference to a Theban was a coincidence.

VII.1.c A Model for Eteocles

Some spectators may have been tempted to see in Amphiaraus' situation and in the way that he handles it an indication of how Eteocles will behave when he comes face to face with the reality that he will meet his brother in battle (cf. Rosenmeyer 1963: 32, 36). Amphiaraus is in a remarkably similar position to Eteocles. As in the case of Eteocles (not to mention Polyneices), he is destined to die in this war between the Thebans and the Argives in accordance with the wishes of Apollo (617-9) (cf. DeVito 1999: 168). The emphasis on Amphiaraus' fate is likely to have reminded spectators of Eteocles' situation (cf. Lesky 1983a: 57), which would be familiar to most from previous versions of the myth. Yet spectators would not yet have known how exactly Eteocles will come to his fate in Aeschylus' play nor how he will acquit himself when he does. Amphiaraus' conduct offers them at least one possible model for how Eteocles will behave.

The description of Amphiaraus offers a flattering comparison. Through no fault of his own, and possibly because of Polyneices' actions, this paragon of strength and wisdom knows that he will die in battle, yet he enters the fray with firm resolve in the hopes of dying well. It is certainly possible for spectators to imagine Eteocles in this position; an Eteocles cast in the mold of Amphiaraus would also be a good and noble man who is tragically forced to fight his brother because of Polyneices' actions, but who will calmly and resolutely face the death destined for him by Apollo and by his father's Curse. Spectators might have been more inclined to make this connection in light of Amphiaraus' negative account of Polyneices and the fact that Eteocles has already shown himself to be calm in the face of danger (Rosenmeyer 1963: 31). And yet, there is no

evidence that this is in fact how Eteocles should be viewed. Although by hinting at a connection between Amphiaraus and Eteocles the play strongly suggests that Eteocles is the hero of this story who will bravely face his fate, it leaves open the possibility of another conclusion to the brothers' fateful meeting.

VII.2 Polyneices

The presence of Polyneices at the seventh gate may have had a variety of effects on spectators' allegiance to Eteocles. On the one hand, Polyneices' claims have already been called into question by Amphiaraus, and he is clearly presented as the aggressor in this battle who is willing to murder his own brother. Eteocles, for his part, realizes that he is the defender best suited to meet his brother in battle and bravely chooses to take the field against him. On the other hand, Polyneices' prayers to the native gods of Thebes and his claims to justice may have shaken the confidence of some spectators in Eteocles' position. The blurring of the brothers' differences in this scene also raises questions; the qualities that make Eteocles and Polyneices fitting combatants undermine the clear distinctions between the brothers and their armies, upon which spectators' allegiance to Eteocles is primarily based. Finally, Eteocles' reference to the family curse could have suggested to spectators that both men may be working under its influence. The combination of questions regarding Eteocles' position, his resemblance to Polyneices, and the allusion to the curse, under which both brothers are likely to be operating, may have led spectators to withdraw their allegiance to Eteocles in preparation for the report of his death in the next scene.

VII.2.A CLAIMS TO JUSTICE

As quoted by the Scout, Polyneices clearly stakes a claim to Thebes and implies that he has been done an injustice by Eteocles. He hopes to punish Eteocles for dishonoring and exiling him (637-8). His shield depicts Δίκη, "Justice," walking beside him, saying that she will lead Polyneices home and that he will take possession his fatherland and of the palace (644-48). He calls upon "his native, ancestral gods," the gods of Thebes, in the hopes that they will look favorably upon his prayers (639-41). Many spectators would have interpreted Polyneices' claims as completely misguided and "falsely confident" (Hutchinson 1985: 143, 145), but his accusations against Eteocles might have given them pause. They may have been struck by the fact that Polyneices believes that the gods of Thebes could possibly come to his aid.[351]

Eteocles, of course, vehemently denies Polyneices' claims to justice. He suggests that the words on Polyneices' shield that identify the woman as Justice are "babbling deliriously" (661, φλύοντα σὺν φοίτωι φρενῶν), and he asserts that Justice has never attended his brother and so is unlikely to attend him now, when he is attacking his fatherland (668-9). Justice would not be Justice if she associated with a man so audacious in his plans (670-1). Eteocles' repudiation of his brother's claims appear to be sincere (cf. 672), and they may have been more forceful for spectators in that they follow immediately after Amphiaraus' criticisms of Polyneices. Eteocles even echoes Amphiaraus' reference to the problematic implications of Polyneices' name (658). Yet, as critics have observed, and as some spectators would have noticed, while Eteocles

[351] Rosenmeyer 1963: 33 argues that Polyneices' claim to justice "prompts us to reflect on the justice or injustice of his enterprise." Lesky 1983a: 57-8 suggests that they merely confuse the issue so that "we must not inquire too closely into the question of where justice lies."

strongly and emotionally denies Polyneices' claims, he does not argue against them (cf. Golden 1964: 84, Sommerstein 1996: 110, and Halliwell 1997: 128). He does not directly address the accusation implicit in Polyneices' claim nor even mention the events that led to Polyneices' exile. And he leaves open the possibility that Polyneices may succeed (659-61). Thus, spectators are left with two conflicting accounts. Some may have been tempted to side with Eteocles based on what they have heard thus far. For others, however, the issue of guilt in the matter that led to Polyneices' exile and attack would be left unresolved.

Even if one were to accept Polyneices' claims as valid, they is more likely to jeopardize spectators' allegiance to Eteocles than to have actively invited sympathy for Polyneices' cause. Suppose that Polyneices is in the right with regard to the original dispute; he is still, as Amphiaraus has reminded spectators, in the process of capturing his fatherland. The nature of the first five Argive leaders tells against Polyneices, and his paean for the capture of Thebes (635), which horrifies the Scout (cf. 633), would also have struck many as inappropriate, reflecting too transparently the selfishness of his aims. And yet, the implication (or, depending on what spectators saw in *Oedipus*, reminder) that Eteocles provoked Polyneices through an original crime might suggest to spectators that Eteocles was complicit in bringing about the danger that now threatens Thebes. In this way, the possibility that Polyneices is in the right is likely to have extended the blame to Eteocles rather than exonerate Polyneices, i.e., to have damned both brothers in the eyes of a majority of spectators.

The desire which Polyneices professes either to kill Eteocles and die beside him or to punish him if he lives (636-38) may have had a more complicated effect on

spectators than some critics have supposed. It shows, at the very least, a willingness on the part of Polyneices to kill his own brother, and this may have been enough to bother many spectators (cf. Hutchinson 1985: 143). Yet some critics have felt that his desire to kill Eteocles and die beside him, as opposed to killing him and then replacing him as king, is ill-considered and, worse, an indication of Polyneices' curse-induced madness (cf. Stehle 2005: 118). Spectators may have been willing to forgive Polyneices' formulation given that it accords with the form of their death as reported by tradition. Yet they might also have concluded that Polyneices refusal to kill his brother unless his own life is threatened actually shows a reluctance on his part to go through with the act. This reluctance, though it may have prevented Polyneices from being seen as an entirely unsympathetic monster in opposition to Eteocles, would not, however, be enough to redeem him in the eyes of most spectators.

VII.2.B THE CURSE

When Eteocles learns that Polyneices is stationed at the Seventh gate and realizes that he will face his brother in battle, he calls upon ἀμὸν Οἰδίπου γένος, "my race of Oedipus," lamenting that it is θεομανής, "driven mad by the gods," θεῶν μέγα στύγος, "an object of great hatred of the gods," and πανδάκρυτον, "for all to cry over" (653-4). He also observes that the curses of his father have now been brought to fulfillment (655). This outburst is often taken as the first indication that Eteocles "no longer appears as the

prudent defender of his city, but rather as the accursed son of Oidipous" (Lesky 1983a: 58).[352]

The extent of the curse's influence upon Eteocles' actions at this stage is not laid out clearly for spectators. When Eteocles asserts that the curse has been fulfilled, presumably by the prospect of the two brothers fighting for their patrimony, he implies that it is no longer in effect. Judging by what follows, he does not yet know that he and Polyneices will kill each other. Spectators who knew from tradition the outcome of their encounter would suspect that the curse has not yet worked itself out. But there is little concrete evidence in this passage to suggest that the curse is affecting Eteocles' decision-making abilities. Eteocles does not exhibit the frenzied behavior that might suggest to spectators that he is under the influence of an outside force as, for instance, does Orestes in the *Choephori* (Brown 1977: 309-10).[353] Eteocles' Lament is hardly an admission of his own curse-inflicted insanity. It follows immediately on the Scout's description of Polyneices, and though he suggests that the line of Oedipus is θεομανής, "driven mad by the gods," one might easily conclude that he is referring more to Polyneices than to himself[354] and that it is Polyneices' behavior, not his own, that reminds Eteocles of his accursed family. Similarly, θεῶν μέγα στύγος may be targeted at Polyneices in particular, suggesting that he, like Laius and perhaps Oedipus, is hated by the gods because of offensive actions, or it may suggest more generally that brothers' horrible fate

[352] See in particular Solmsen 1937. See also Kirkwood 1969: 10, Thalmann 1978: 97, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 35, and Sommerstein 1996: 201.
[353] Kirkwood 1969: 15 argues that "[a]fter this apparent determination to suppress the emotional storm that he feels, he goes ahead to give the same kind of analytical and deliberate rejection of the attacker's claim, the same kind of demonstration of the defender's appropriateness, as he has given five times before." Cf. Lesky 1983a: 58. I certainly think it is going too far to say with Solmsen 1937: 198 that "[h]is language in this scene is most passionate; we cannot imagine anything that he says here coming from the same balanced state of mind in which he arranged everything for the defense."
[354] Cf. Tucker 1908: 134, who says that "Eteocles is not distinctly regarding himself as θεομανής."

to meet in one another in battle, even if it is brought on by Polyneices' actions, is evidence of the gods' hatred just as Laius' and Oedipus' fate was evidence of the gods' hatred in their cases. This second suggestion is certainly the implication of calling the entire race πανδάκρυτον, "for all to cry over."

However spectators interpret Eteocles' response, there is no question that his lament invites spectators to view his present actions in terms of his checkered past and suggests the possibility that he and his brother are operating under the influence of their father's curse (cf. Lesky 1983a: 58); by calling upon the race of Oedipus, he effectively includes himself among those victims of the gods. In doing so, he prompts spectators to look for indications of the curse at work in the situation in which he and his brother find themselves. With this in mind, spectators would have scrutinized closely Eteocles' decision to face his brother in battle and risk fratricide.

VII.2.C Willing Fratricide or Self-Defense?

After Eteocles' speech, the Chorus suggests that Eteocles and Polyneices will inevitably kill one another, that such deaths can never be purified, and that Eteocles must be in the throes of delusion to pursue such a fate. Most critics have taken it for granted that the Chorus is right, i.e., that they are echoing the response that most of Aeschylus' audience at Athens would have had at the prospect of Eteocles' decision (cf. Gagarin 1976: 159-60, Parker 1983: 122).[355] The matter is not, however, so straightforward. We have no evidence for the punishment of fratricides in fifth-century Athens (Parker 1983:

[355] See, however, the passages in Aeschylus cited by Hutchinson 1985: 154 that might cast doubt on this assumption. Parker 1983: 122 claims that "[k]in-killing is utterly abominable," but most of his evidence for this statement is taken from tragedy, including the Chorus's pronouncement in the *Seven*.

123). It is proposed in Plato's *Laws* 868c-869a, one of our only sources for this topic, that fratricides be punished with three years of exile and permanent separation from their family. This would certainly put a damper on Eteocles' plans to continue to rule Thebes (cf. von Fritz 1963: 199),[356] but even if "Plato is certainly reflecting Athenian sentiment here," and this is no certainty, it is worth noting that his account of fratricide contradicts the Chorus in saying that the crime can be expiated (Parker 1983: 122: 137).

Other aspects of Eteocles' situation might also mitigate the effect of his decision upon spectators. First, though a duel would be likely to end in the death of at least one of its combatants, and though most spectators would have expected that this duel would end in the brothers' mutual fratricide, there is no indication in his response that Eteocles is particularly eager to shed Polyneices' blood.[357] Polyneices plans either to kill Eteocles or to capture Thebes and exile him; Eteocles is resolved to prevent both of these possibilities and so decides to face Polyneices in battle. Spectators could reasonably have concluded that Eteocles is merely defending himself and his city, a motivation that seems understandable and even praiseworthy (cf. Patzer 1958: 110). Secondly, although Eteocles and Polyneices are brothers, they are also enemies at war with one another. Whatever pollution was attached to killing an enemy in battle seems to have been easily purified (cf. 679-80; *Laws* 865a), and spectators may have taken this into account in their judgment of Eteocles. The *Laws*, for what it is worth, suggests that fratricide carries no guilt if it takes place in battle or in self-defense (869c). Thus, it is at least possible that spectators would not even have considered the possibility that Eteocles is doing

[356] It is worth noting that if the end of the *Seven* is not genuine, Eteocles would not have any family left.
[357] It might be going too far to say with Patzer 1958: 110 that Eteocles has no hatred for his brother. Cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 35.

something wrong until the Chorus mention it. Of course, some spectators may have presumed that the pollution associated with fratricide is unshakeable regardless of the context or mindset under which it is committed,[358] and they may have considered Eteocles' decision highly problematic. But it seems likely that most spectators would have been uncertain at the very least, and possibly unconcerned, as to the religious implications of Eteocles' position.[359]

Not only do the statements of the Scout and Eteocles avoid any mention of fratricide or its repercussions, they seem to discourage spectators from considering it by focusing instead on how fitting it is that the two brothers should meet in battle. Their dispute is the reason the Thebans and Argives are fighting one another. Polyneices has called Eteocles out. Eteocles himself asks if there is anyone ἐνδικώτερος, "more just," than him to face Polyneices and observes that the two are well suited to fight one another: "leader against leader, brother against brother, enemy against enemy" (ἄρχοντί τ' ἄρχων καὶ κασιγνήτωι κάσις, ἐχθρὸς ἐχθρῶι, 674-5). In fact, the whole of the scene till now, with its perfectly matched Argive leaders and Theban defenders, appears to have been preparing for this moment. Eteocles and Polyneices are the culmination of the selection process and "the most suitable confrontation of all" (Garvie 1978: 72). Taken together, these factors suggest that Eteocles would need no help from the gods in selecting himself to meet Polyneices.[360] It is hard to imagine spectators wondering at this

[358] Cf. Dodds 1951: 36, the examples in Parker 1983: 110, and Hutchinson 1985: 149.
[359] See Parker 1983: 109-11 on the difficulty of pinning down a model for how the pollution attached to murder was thought to work in ancient Greece.
[360] There is some controversy as to how Eteocles selects the Theban defenders to meet the Argive leaders. A number of critics have noted that the tenses Eteocles uses to describe his selections differ over the course of the scene, and include present, future, and perfect tenses. There are (at least) three possible interpretations for this. Eteocles has said that he will station seven men including himself at the seven gates of the city. The most literal interpretation of the tenses would suggest that Eteocles made some of the

point why he does not select a new Theban to take his place or trade Argives with one of the other defenders.

At this stage, the emphasis on Eteocles' and Polyneices' similarities, as leaders of their respective armies, as brothers, and as personal enemies, reinforces the impression that they, and no one else, should face each other at the seventh gate. At the same time, most spectators would be reminded that the brothers will die in identical ways, at each other's hands. This scene also picks up on Polyneices' claims and the confusion of the issue of justice, continuing the process through which the differences between Eteocles and Polyneices, which have defined the situation and are likely to have determined spectators' response to the brothers thus far in the play, begin to blur. The qualities that the brother's share, not least of all their father's curse, begin to emerge as the defining aspect of their relationship. This process will move forward in the next scene and culminate in the report of their deaths, where Eteocles and Polyneices will be almost indistinguishable.

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assignments (those in the perfect tense), but was interrupted before he was able to make the rest, which he must now make during the scene (those in the present and future tenses). This suggests that Eteocles has at least some leeway in selecting the defenders and could have chosen a different Theban to face Polyneices (he uses the future tense at the seventh gate). Cf. Wilamowitz 1917 and Sommerstein 1996: 105-6. Others have argued that, as Eteocles indicated earlier, all of the gate assignments have already been made and that the present and future tenses refer to already made decisions. Thus, Eteocles and Polyneices' meeting comes about by chance, i.e., through the intervention of the gods or Oedipus' curse. This view may also find support when Eteocles says that Hermes chose Hyperbius at the fourth gate (508). His lament at 653-4 is an indication of his surprised realization that the curse was at work in pitting him against Polyneices. Cf. Wolff 1958: 92, Burnett 1973: 348, Thalmann 1978: 126. Lastly, critics have suggested that Eteocles is making all of the decisions on a case-by-case basis, and the perfect tenses refer to the certainty of his decisions ("I have already (as you were speaking) chosen…") rather than the time at which they were made. Cf. von Fritz 1962: 202, Kirkwood 1969: 13. This view suggests that the decision to post himself at the seventh gate is entirely in Eteocles' hands. My view, that this is not the primary purpose of this scene, may find some support in the view of Lesky 1961 and Dawe 1963: 35 that the scene is intentionally ambiguous. See also Brown 1977: 307.

VIII ETEOCLES AND THE CHORUS, AGAIN

In the second encounter between Eteocles and the Chorus, spectators learn in (what for many is likely to be) a new twist that Eteocles' decision to meet his brother will incur pollution that can never be purified.[361] Eteocles is nevertheless resolved to go through with his decision because it has been predetermined by the curse of his father, by his own dreams, and because to back down would be cowardly. On the one hand, there is some evidence to support the Chorus's claim that Eteocles is insane to follow this path, and some spectators may have withdrawn all allegiance at this point. On the other hand, spectators may have admired Eteocles for upholding a heroic ideal regardless of what would happen to him. It is likely that most spectators will understand Eteocles' motivations for pursuing the fight, but recognize that in doing so he will commit an act that would at best render him unfit to rule Thebes. The scene does not reveal Eteocles to be the embodiment of pure evil, but it clearly suggests that he can no longer be the "hero" of this play. The scene may well have been crafted to alienate spectators' allegiance to Eteocles in preparation for his impending death.

VIII.1 A MAD DESIRE TO COMMIT FRATRICIDE

Whereas the Scout and Eteocles drew attention away from the implications of killing one's brother, the Chorus's response recasts Eteocles' decision solely in terms of fratricide and reveals to spectators the enormity of the crime that Eteocles is resolved upon committing. In this way, the passage forces spectators to reconsider an action that

[361] Spectators may have been as surprised by the Chorus's passionate response to Eteocles as they were earlier when Eteocles passionately (and, in responding to a choral ode, somewhat unexpectedly; cf. Hutchinson 1985: 75) reacted to their first ode.

they were previously led to approve. The Chorus asserts that Eteocles is undeniably transgressing the laws of gods and men. According to the Chorus, killing a brother is "killing oneself" (αὐτοκτόνος) and "bears bitter fruit" (πικρόκαρπον, 694). The blood of one's brother is unlawful to shed (αἵματος οὐ θεμιστοῦ, 695), and, once spilled, can never be purified (literally, οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τοῦδε τοῦ μιάσματος (682), "there is no old age for this pollution"). Understandably, given their position, the Chorus suggests that Eteocles must be insane to risk this crime. In their view, only a θυμοπληθὴς δορίμαργος ἄτα, a "battle-crazed delusion filling his heart," could impel Eteocles to go through with his decision. They go on to suggest that it is an ὠμοδακὴς ἄγαν ἵμερος "excessively fiercely gnawing desire," that is driving him to pursue this "evil love" (κακὸς ἔρως) (693-4; 688-9). Can he really want to cull his brother's blood (718)? Perhaps worst of all, the Chorus suggests that Eteocles is becoming ὀργὴν ὅμοιος, "similar in temperament," to his brother Polyneices. Eteocles' comment that he is "whetted" (τεθηγμένος) and that the Chorus will not "blunt" him (οὐκ ἀπαμβλυνεῖς, 715) may have conveyed to spectators that he is possessed by a passion in keeping with that which the Chorus describes (cf. Hutchinson 1985: 160). Spectators may also have noted that Eteocles echoes Tydeus' accusations of cowardice against Amphiaraus (θείνει δ' ὀνείδει μάντιν…σαίνειν μόρον, 382-3) when he asks τί οὖν ἔτ' ἄν σαίνομεν ὀλέθριον μόρον; (704), "why should we still cringe before death?" They may have taken the fact that Eteocles adopts an outlook similar to Tydeus as evidence that, like Tydeus, Eteocles is also mad in his desire for battle against his brother (cf. Bacon 1964: 30, Thalmann 1978: 119).

Although the Chorus's position marks a radical shift in the way that Eteocles' decision is portrayed, and though they have previously espoused extremely conservative religious viewpoints, it is doubtful that many spectators would question the validity of their claims regarding fratricide.[362] Even if their view is not exactly in line with current Athenian laws on fratricide, it is certainly within the realm of possibility. Most spectators could at least understand why the gods would not look kindly upon shedding the blood of one's brother, regardless of the circumstances. More important, the play offers spectators no competing position: Eteocles does not contradict them and, in fact, acknowledges that the act is a κακόν, an "evil thing" (683, 719).[363] Thus, spectators are likely to have accepted that evil, unpurifiable fratricide is a reality in the world in which the play takes place; Eteocles is entering upon an action that may very well have dire consequences. There may, however, be some reason for spectators to have disputed the Chorus's claim that Eteocles is insane to undertake this action.

VIII.2 THE CURSE

Eteocles has clear, if debatable, reasons for his decision. He is not blindly rushing into this act. He holds that the meeting with his brother in single combat cannot be averted; it is the fulfillment of his "beloved father's hateful curse," whose presence he feels in the air (709) and sitting beside him (695-6). It was predicted by his dream

[362] Most critics grant that the Chorus is right on this point. See, e.g., Gagarin 1976: 160, Hutchinson 1985: 148. See also Kirkwood 1969: 21, who grants that the Chorus is right on this point but has reservations regarding some of their other positions.
[363] Cf. Gagarin 1976: 160, Hutchinson 1985: 146.

visions (710-1) (cf. Sommerstein 1996: 100-1).[364] He justifiably concludes that god (θεός) is pushing the matter forward and chooses to give in, to allow, as he says, the "entire family of Laius, which Apollo hates" to sail freely down the river of death (691-2). The Chorus, in contrast, contends that Eteocles can simply decide not to face his brother. They believe that the gods can still help Eteocles and suggest that the Fury will leave his house when the gods accept a sacrifice from his hands (699-701). They submit, more tentatively, that the *daemon* that presides over Eteocles' fate may, given time, look more gently upon him (705-8). The question is whether spectators would consider their position meaningful.

Would it be as easy as the Chorus suggests? Can Eteocles simply walk away? The Chorus members themselves do not appear to be quite sure about their second contention. Their first suggestion, however, that Eteocles can appeal to the gods to appease the Furies, is not outside of the realm of possibility. Though performed after the *Seven*, the *Eumenides* indicates that Athenian spectators were capable of imagining an Olympian god intervening to save (just barely) a mortal pursued by Furies. The real issue is that the Chorus's advice relies on a belief in the kind of drastic intervention that they hoped for, and which Eteocles rejected, in their first encounter (Thalmann 1976: 95, Brown 1977: 316).[365] Eteocles' position is likewise in keeping with his earlier belief in the ineluctable power of fate (cf. Gagarin 1976: 161, Brown 1977: 316). His view may have accorded more closely with some spectators' beliefs regarding the working of the

[364] Eteocles' dreams may be a new development meant to show that the meeting is inevitable, but see the arguments of Burnett 1973 cited above.
[365] The Chorus do call for sacrifice, which Eteocles approved, but it is the next step, in which the gods intervene to put a stop to the Furies' pursuit, that might seem more farfetched.

universe (cf. Jackson 1984: 199-200).[366] Yet Eteocles clearly has his father's curse on his mind (whether literally or figuratively), and spectators may have hesitated to endorse his viewpoint given the likelihood that the curse is clouding his judgment (but cf. Taplin 1977: 157, Brown 1977: 310). Spectators may not have known whom to believe in this matter, but they may have more readily embraced Eteocles' other reason for undertaking the duel, namely his sense of honor.

VIII.3 THE HEROIC CODE

Eteocles appears to be inured to the κακόν, "evil," of committing fratricide or dying at the hands of his brother, but, true to the derivation of his name, insists that it be done with honor (literally, αἰσχύνης ἄτερ, "without shame"). This, he says, is "the only boon among the dead," and necessary if one would win εὔκλεια, "good reputation" (683-5). The Chorus, in turn, attempts to convince Eteocles that he will not be called a coward (κακός) if he finds a good way to live (698-9).[367] They contend that νίκην γε μέντοι καὶ κακὴν τιμᾶι θεός (716), "victory is what god honors, even a cowardly one,"[368] a sentiment which Eteocles instantly rejects as unbecoming of a warrior.

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[366] Brown 1977: 316 argues that the disagreement is in keeping with Eteocles' and the Chorus's earlier encounter: "[w]e are here presented, then, with the same contrast that we saw earlier between a somber realistic fatalism and a trusting intuitive feminine piety."

[367] It is worth noting that Eteocles and the Chorus seem to use same word, κακός, to describe both the prospect of fratricide and cowardice.

[368] A member of the audience alert to the similarities between Thebes' battle against the Argives and Athens' against the Persians may see in the Chorus's "νίκην κακὴν" a reference to the decision to abandon Athens in the face of the Persian invasion. One could argue that Eteocles' "hoplite" (717) stands in contrast to the rowers who ensured Athens victory. If these elements are present, some spectators may have seen Eteocles insistence on the necessity to face death in order to save honor might seem needlessly impractical and over-the-top. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 38 argues that the ideals of shame and glory are to be understood in the context of the "heroic world" in which these events are supposed to take place. Both views are perhaps possible. Eteocles' position is totally in keeping

Spectators may have understood Eteocles' compulsion to fight. When shown for what it is, cowardice is rarely endorsed.[369] In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon attempts to justify his proposal for the Greeks to flee the encroaching Trojans in their ships, reasoning that οὐ γάρ τις νέμεσις φυγέειν κακόν, οὐδ' ἀνὰ νύκτα. βέλτερον ὅς φεύγων προφύγηι κακὸν ἠὲ ἁλώηι (14.80), "for there is nothing shameful about fleeing evil, not even in the night; it is better for one fleeing to escape than to be captured." Odysseus immediately rebukes him, rejects the idea, and repeatedly criticizes the statement (83, 95), saying that no man should allow an utterance like this to escape his lips, let alone the leader of the Greek army (90-94). The impression that Eteocles is bravely doing his duty in the face of an enormous threat may find corroboration when he asks τί οὖν ἔτ' ἄν σαίνομεν ὀλέθριον μόρον; "why should we still cringe before death?" (704). Spectators who observed that this is an echo of Tydeus' false accusation of cowardice against Amphiaraus (θείνει δ' ὀνείδει μάντιν…σαίνειν μόρον, 382-3) might have taken this as a clear indication on the part of the playwright that Eteocles is indeed following the model of Amphiaraus, bravely facing down his fate even though he is aware of the danger it holds (DeVito 1999: 168-9).

Spectators who viewed the situation in this light may have admired Eteocles' resolve to face his brother on the grounds that he is fulfilling his duty as leader of the Thebans and embodying a heroic ideal, but, at the same time, they may have recognized that his actions entail that he commit an act that runs contrary to divine and human law and from which he is unlikely to recover even if he were to survive (cf. Solmsen 1937: 203, Kirkwood 1969: 14, Jackson 1988: 295, Cairns 1993: 183). These spectators are

[369] Hutchinson 1985: 160 notes that the Chorus's characterization of a victory in which Eteocles does not fight as cowardly does not help their case.

likely to have identified with Eteocles' situation, seeing in the confluence of events that has brought him to this pass an indication that all humans are finally at the mercy of the gods. They could have appreciated the lamentable nature of Eteocles' fate.

VIII.4 Undermining Eteocles

Although spectators may have sympathized with Eteocles' impossible situation, two factors in the scene, more subtle than his decision to undertake fratricide, weaken Eteocles' position and tip the balance away from him. Firstly, Eteocles' actions can no longer be interpreted solely in terms of his role as Thebes' defender.[370] His present decision has nothing to do with the people. He will face his brother in battle because he feels the weight of his father's curse upon him and because he hopes to avoid shame and achieve personal glory in death (Rosenmeyer 1982: 37-39, Brown 1977: 311-2).[371] It was primarily in the role of leader and defender of Thebes that Eteocles demonstrated the leadership, self-sacrifice, and concern for the welfare of his people that invited spectators to feel allegiance to him. As this aspect of Eteocles moves into the background, some of spectators' appreciation for him may have gone with it.

Many critics have observed that this encounter between Eteocles and the Chorus represents a reversal of their first encounter.[372] The women now play Eteocles' part: they attempt, as Eteocles did before them, to dissuade their conversation partner from a position that they consider overly emotional and destructive; they speak down to him,

[370] Cf. Halliwell 1997: 127.
[371] One might argue that the shame he fears would come as a result of abandoning his city in its time of need. Cf. von Fritz 1962: 212-3.
[372] On the reversal of the roles of Eteocles and the Chorus, see Solmsen 1937: 201, Wolff 1958: 89, Dawe 1963: 31, Lesky 1983a: 58, Thalmann 1978: 94, Jackson 1988: 300, Vernant 1988: 282, and Halliwell 1997: 129. See Winnington-Ingram 1983: 33, Brown 1977: 315, and Hutchinson 1985: xxxvii on the parallels between the two scenes.

calling him τέκνον, "child," and giving him advice, which Eteocles willingly accepts (though he does not take it, cf. 713). Spectators who held a low opinion of women's cognitive abilities might be uncomfortable at the prospect of the leader of a city at war soliciting advice from an easily excitable group of women regarding a decision of the utmost importance (cf. Kirkwood 1969: 21). Yet even those who would not reject the advice of a woman out of hand might recall Eteocles' excessively harsh denunciations of all womankind and of the Chorus in particular. They might have recognized that Eteocles is contradicting his earlier position and seen in this development an indication that he is not the man he was in the previous encounter.

IX Victims of Fate, the Curse

The ode that follows Eteocles' and the Chorus's final encounter picks up on and confirms Eteocles' sense that he is oppressed by the gods and the curse of his father. Enough has perhaps been said about the nature of the family curse in section I of this chapter. In this section, I will merely draw attention to how spectators' view of Eteocles and Polyneices would have been affected by the revelation that their existence is burdened to such a degree by the gods' animosity and by their father's curse. In this ode, the Chorus does not present the brothers' struggle in terms of who is right and who is wrong, of who is responsible for their meeting, or of their personal motives for undertaking it. As in the *Agamemnon*, Aeschylus changes how spectators view the present situation by shifting their focus to the distant past. The Chorus recounts Laius' crime against Apollo, which "remains into the third generation" (744-5), describes Oedipus' crimes and suffering, and ends the ode with the story of how Oedipus

pronounced the curse, now fulfilled (766-7) that his sons would divide his property with iron (785-91). By placing the focus on these stories and how they bear upon the present quarrel between the brothers, the play strongly implies that everything that has happened between them, and everything that will happen to them, is the result of these inescapable divine forces. Thus, spectators learn that the events portrayed thus far in the *Seven* are, to some degree, moot. The real action has, as the Chorus reveals, already taken place behind the scenes, and the brothers' fates have long since been sealed. In this way, the qualities that distinguished the brothers and seemed so important earlier in the play continue to fade away; Eteocles appears to be less and less the heroic defender of his city, more and more the cursed son of a cursed father. Some spectators may have seen this as even more evidence of the impossible nature of Eteocles' predicament and pitied him (and perhaps even Polyneices) as hapless victims of their family curse. Yet other spectators may have had trouble sympathizing with these doomed brothers.

And yet, the ode does not leave spectators adrift. It offers in Eteocles' place a new focus for their sympathies, the city of Thebes. The Chorus laments the prospect of Eteocles' and Polyneices' death (739-41), but they do not fear the deaths so much as acknowledge their inevitability (cf. 734-5, 726). It is the welfare of the city for which the Chorus is actually afraid. They recall the threat that Laius' disobedience to Apollo posed it (748-9) and observe that a wave of evils, triple strength, presumably from the combined force of three generations of Laius' house, now crashes down upon the city's stern (758-63). They are worried that the city may be destroyed along with the kings (764-5). Some spectators may have taken a cue from the Chorus and shifted their concerns away from the doomed brothers and toward Thebes, whose fate is still in question.

X End of the Labdacids

Spectators learn from the Messenger that Eteocles and Polyneices have in fact killed one another at the seventh gate. The Messenger's speech and the Chorus's closing lament conclude the play by focusing on the death of the brothers and, with them, the end of the curse and the end of the house of Laius. The finality of this conclusion would be strengthened if the bodies of both brothers were brought out as evidence of their fate (cf. 848). The Chorus's response to this development reveals a tension between the impulse to mourn the brothers and to celebrate the city's safety. Spectators could have felt a similar pull as the focus shifts from the experiences of Eteocles to that of the city and those left behind. The Chorus's treatment of the brothers, however, first erasing their differences and then focusing on their shortcomings, would have eased this shift in focus and made spectators more comfortable with the end of house of Laius.

X.1 Shifting Alignment

With the revelation of the brother's death, the Messenger's speech brings about the most drastic possible shift in spectators' alignment, away from the brothers and toward the city of Thebes.[373] With only a few exceptions, spectators have been aligned throughout the play with Eteocles and viewed the invasion of the Argives from his perspective. Now they learn that he and his brother are in fact dead, as the Chorus hinted earlier. Eteocles and his brother are still of interest, but it is through the Messenger and

[373] Cf. Sommerstein 1996: 120: "The city figures in them as the object of the brothers' ambitions, the bone of their contention (cf. 882); its men are the pawns of their quarrel (cf. 922-5), its women lament their loss. The whole perspective has changed."

the Chorus, both inhabitants of Thebes, that spectators will experience the aftermath of the brothers' death. As one might expect, both the Messenger and the Chorus are particularly concerned about the welfare of the city, which has been a focus of the Chorus's previous odes. The Messenger begins by reassuring the Chorus that the city has "escaped the yoke of slavery" (793) and describes the defeat of the Argives and the victories at six of the seven gates of the city (794-99). The death of the brothers at the seventh is almost an afterthought.[374] The messenger acknowledges that one can either celebrate the city's safety or weep over the death of Eteocles and Polyneices (814); spectators may have noted that the Chorus begins their final song with a prayer to Zeus and the gods for saving the city (822-4). Only after this do they wonder whether they should sing a victory song for the city or bewail the brothers (825-28). This is a drastic shift in spectators' alignment, especially given that Eteocles' interests and the city's have diverged only recently. Whether spectators followed the shift in focus and celebrated the city's victory or maintained their focus on the brothers' fate and its implications is another question, on which see below.

X.2 Together in Death, Victims of the Curse

The conclusion of the *Seven* follows the trajectory of the previous ode, presenting Eteocles and Polyneices first and foremost as victims of their father's curse and the will of the gods and erasing any remaining distinction between the brothers. Both the Messenger and the Chorus repeatedly stress the role that Apollo's punishment for Laius' disobedience and Oedipus' curse have played in bringing about their deaths, including

[374] One can argue that this is for the sake of suspense, but most spectators would know that this was where the play was heading, and the Chorus, at any rate, seemed sure that this is what would happen.

oblique references to its fulfillment (cf. 800-2, 842-4[375]; 815-19 832-3, 840-1, 886-7. 898-9, 902-9, 911-14, 941-46, 947-950). In fact, the Chorus reveals that the brothers were doomed by no less than eight different divine forces (though some of them are clearly different ways of thinking about the same phenomenon). At various points, they attribute their fate to the influence of Apollo, the curse of Oedipus (including Oedipus' shade: 977, the Curses: 954-5; cf. 832-3, 840-1, and the Fury: 978), Ares (944-46, cf. 910), Zeus (948), *Ate* (957, 1001), a *daemon* (959-60), and Fate (976). The brothers' death is over-determined, to say the least, and, as in the case of the preceding ode, the impression may have been that their individual struggles were simply a by-product of this divine influence.

This impression may have been strengthened by the fact that all traces of the original incidents that led to the brothers' quarrel or to the events depicted in the first two-thirds of this play fall away in the final scene. The Chorus, particularly from line 961 to the end of the play, fail to distinguish between the brothers in any meaningful way (cf. Podlecki 1964: 299, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 43, Gagarin 1976: 122, Hutchinson 1985: 173). The Messenger concludes from their kinship and common fate that "they had a common *daemon*" (811-2). Spectators who take seriously the Messenger's and the Chorus's desire to lament the fate of Eteocles and Polyneices[376] may have taken the identification of the brothers as an indication that their slates are wiped clean.[377] They are dead; in dying they have appeased Apollo, and the city has survived intact. Because

[375] The Chorus's statement that θέσφατ' οὐκ ἀμβλύνεται (844), "oracles are not blunted," echoes Eteocles' comment at 715: οὐκ ἀπαμβλυνεῖς, "you will not blunt me." Spectators may have taken this as confirmation that Eteocles was indeed forced by the power of the oracle and curse to face his brother in battle.
[376] The Chorus suggests that the city will lament the loss of Eteocles and Polyneices (842, 900-2, 908-10)
[377] Cf. Rosenmeyer 1971: 44: "Now the curse has bound the brothers together in a new union and wiped out the scores of guilt and resentment."

spectators were no longer forced to contend with the brothers' complicated past, it may have been easier for them to pity the brothers as ill-fated and ill-omened (827, 838) victims of the gods who may have saved the city through their deaths.[378] Spectators who believed that the gods work in concert with human actions, however, may have taken the degree to which the gods were involved in Eteocles' and Polyneices' death as an indication not only that they were doomed from the start, but also that they brought the gods' anger down upon themselves, one way or the other. These spectators may have been inclined to shift their sympathies with the new shift in alignment, away from Eteocles and toward the inhabitants of the city.

X.3 The End of Laius' House

The Messenger and the Chorus make it clear that, along with the brothers, the house of Laius has also perished. The Messenger states that the brothers destroyed their ill-fated family (813). Chorus imply that the brothers have destroyed their family line with a series of different images: they have captured their father's house by spear (877-8), found wretched deaths "to the ruin of their house," (879-80), are sackers of their house's walls (880-1), and struck a blow that went through their bodies and their house (895-6). They also note that the Curses have routed the family (955-6). Perhaps more to the point, the Chorus repeatedly states that Oedipus' only sons have died childless (828). In this way ends the trilogy that traced the progress of the family's curse through three generations, beginning with Laius' disobedience to Apollo and ending with the deaths of

[378] Cf. Rosenmeyer 1963: 44 and Seaford 2000: 40-1, among others.

Eteocles and Polyneices. Their troubles, and the troubles they brought down upon others, have come to an end.

X.4 Better Off Dead

The Chorus's closing lament ostensibly laments the death of Eteocles and Polyneices, but, by emphasizing the welfare of the city, observing the forces that brought about their demise, dwelling in particular on the family's curse, and describing in detail the misguided act that ended their lives, suggests that things may be better off this way. By emphasizing the brothers' negative characteristics, the final song may have further encouraged spectators to shift their allegiance away from Eteocles and toward the city, thereby allowing them to appreciate the end of the house of Laius as a conclusion both in line with fate and the will of the gods and necessary for the city's safety.

The Chorus's closing lament not only "blurs the moral distinction between the two brother" but also casts Eteocles and Polyneices in a negative light (Hutchinson 1985: xxxviii, Foley 2001: 49). The focus of the song is on qualities that are likely to have alienated spectators' sympathies for the brothers. The Chorus continues to divorce Eteocles from his role as defender of the city. The Chorus begins the ode by asserting that it was Zeus and the *daemones* who watch over the city who saved the city (822-24); they make no mention of Eteocles' contributions and even assert that the brothers were, in fact, responsible for the deaths of many citizens and foreigners (922-25). The Chorus emphasizes the foolishness of the brothers' undertaking, referring to their impious thoughts (831), insane conflict (935), and unbelievable act (846). The say that the brothers were δύσφρονες, "reckless," refused to listen to their friends (i.e., the Chorus),

and could not get their fill of evils (875-6). The Chorus also reminds spectators that the brothers were the product of an incestuous union (926-32). Even the suggestion that Eteocles and Polyneices were striving for monarchy (880-1), which is of course true, may have sounded distasteful to spectators when stated in this way.[379] Finally, although the Chorus suggests that the brothers' enmity has ceased (938), their belief that burying the brothers in the "most honorable place" near their father will cause Oedipus pain (1003, 1004) implies that his hatred for his sons and perhaps the pollution they have taken up by killing one another will linger on.

XI Conclusion

The *Seven* offers a different model for concluding a trilogy than we see in the *Eumenides*. The reason may be as simple as the nature of the source material upon which the trilogies were based; the story of Orestes traditionally averted punishment for its protagonist, whereas the story of Eteocles and Polyneices ends with their deaths at one another's hands in fulfillment of their father's curse. It may, therefore, be no surprise that the Theban trilogy does not present a transcendent solution to the issue of human suffering at the hands of the gods like the *Eumenides*, but rather shows how the force of divine disfavor and human impetuousness can run their course, ravaging an entire family as they do so. The *Seven*'s shift in alignment toward the city at its conclusion and its attempts to shift spectators' sympathies in the city's direction may, however, reflect a desire on the part of the playwright not to end the tragedy on a note of absolute

[379] This emphasis on the death of members of a royal family, where their striving to be king leads to their demise, is in keeping with the idea that tragedy dramatizes the problems inherent in monarchies in order to pave the way for democracy. See Seaford 1995: 328-67 and 1996: 286-7 and Connor 1989: 7-32.

hopelessness, focusing instead on the good that can be salvaged when the dust settles after the gods have done their work.[380]

XII Epilogue: The End of the *Seven against Thebes*?

Many critics have dismissed the last 74 lines of the play (1005-78) as a later addition to the *Seven* that attempts to bridge the gap between its portrayal of the brothers and the version of their story presented in Sophocles' *Antigone* if not the *Antigone* itself.[381] For the purposes of this dissertation, I will consider it a late addition. As it stands, the conclusion asks a number of interesting questions, but does so at the expense of much of what has come before it. It picks up on the tension between the interests of the city and the interests of the brothers, treated more subtle in the previous scenes, but replaces the earlier and dramatically complicated treatment of Eteocles' role as leader with a new and unheralded ruling "council of the people" to achieve this.[382] It contradicts, without addressing, the Chorus's earlier assumption that the brothers will be buried in the same grave (or ancestral tomb).[383] It introduces the idea that Polyneices might suffer from pollution for attacking his fatherland, but has to ignore and even contradict the Chorus's references to the pollution that the brothers were supposed to have accrued for their

[380] We see a similar shift in at the end of the *Eumenides* from Orestes' story to Athens', though to different effect.
[381] See, e.g., Dawe 1967: 16-28, Fraenkel 1964, Kirkwood 1969: 25 n.26, Brown 1976, Lesky 1983: 59, Sommerstein 1996: 132. Lloyd-Jones 1959, Flintoff 1980, and Orwin 1980 are among the few dissenters, though Lloyd-Jones cites earlier proponents of the ending's authenticity (p. 81). Brown 1967 argues for removing Antigone but retaining the final lines in slightly altered form. Many of these critics also hold lines 874-960 in various degrees of doubt. See the discussion at Brown 1967: 207.
[382] The mention of a "council of the people" (1005), though not impossible in the world of tragedy (cf. the role of the people in the *Suppliants* and Lloyd-Jones 1959: 95), seems abrupt here and awkward given the stress that has been placed on Eteocles' leadership throughout the play. Are spectators to suppose that this council already existed or that it was created immediately after Eteocles' death? No explanation is offered.
[383] Brown 1967: 213.

mutual fratricide.[384] It asks spectators to return to the view of Eteocles and Polyneices as complete opposites that was developed earlier in the play, but, in doing so, fails to grapple with the impression developed in the previous song that the brothers are first and foremost victims of their father's curse. And it does not do much with the reassertion of the brother's differences, leaving matters at an impasse at the play's conclusion. By introducing another aggressive woman who supports Polyneices' cause, this conclusion might ask spectators to rethink Eteocles' earlier problems with the assertive Chorus, but, again, does not do much with this new development. None of these complaints are fatal to considering the ending authentic. In the end, I am tempted to dismiss this conclusion primarily on the grounds that it undoes much of what in my analysis made the previous ending powerful without offering substantial interpretive gains in their place.[385]

[384] This may, however, be thought consistent with the actions of a new regime.

[385] Critics have also complained that this conclusion shows the influence of Sophocles' play, thus suggesting that it is an obviously late addition. One might point out that the issue in the *Antigone* is the role of Creon rather than a democratic council, and that Antigone is alone in Sophocles' play, whereas here she has the help of a sympathetic chorus. These issues may be answered if we suppose that the conclusion of the *Seven* is responding to a tradition of which Sophocles' *Antigone* is an example, not the only one. Critics also complain that it introduces new tension and questions at the end of the trilogy, where one might expect finality. Again, this is not absolute proof against assertions of its genuineness.

CHAPTER 3: THE DANAIDS IN THE *SUPPLIANTS*, PART I

INTRODUCTION

In spite of the evidence afforded by the discovery of its hypothesis (P. Oxy. 2256 fr. 3), many critics continue to treat the *Suppliants* as one of Aeschylus' most primitive plays.[386] This chapter attempts to remove the last vestiges of primitivism from the *Suppliants* by demonstrating the complexity and the subtlety with which Aeschylus handles the character of the Danaids.[387] Critics have acknowledged, sometimes grudgingly, that the play's depiction of them is often contradictory.[388] Over the course of the play the Danaids are portrayed as innocent victims of the Aegyptids and manipulative murderesses, pious adherents of the gods and irreligious opportunists, terrified girls and brazen women, lifelong virgins and young women on the verge of marriage.[389] In this chapter, I argue that the *Suppliants* actively invites contradictory judgments regarding the Danaids from its spectators. Conflicting evidence regarding the Danaids raises fundamental questions about them that generate interest and derive suspense from their enigmatic nature. An open-ended depiction of the *Suppliants*' main characters is particularly appropriate for this, the first play of its trilogy (cf. Lévy 1985: 30, Garvie

[386] See most recently Scullion 2001: 87-101, who argues for a date in the 470s and perhaps even before the *Persians* on the basis of "the stylistic observations of Denniston and Friis Johansen, the play's lack of a prologue, the long, awkward silence of Danaos, and above all the high proportion of choral lyric" (99-100). See Garvie 1969 and Scullion for a discussion of P. Oxy. 2256 fr. 3 and its bearing on the date of the *Suppliants*.

[387] Wilamowitz and Vürtheim suggest that Aeschylus' treatment represents a lack of interest or technique in the presentation of character. See von Fritz 1962: 163.

[388] See, e.g., Headlam 1900: 111-2, Murray 1958: 3, 9, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 60, and Gagarin 1976: 130 n.34

[389] Critics have argued at one time or another that each one of these aspects reflects the "real" nature of the Danaids to be revealed in subsequent plays, and convincing evidence can be adduced in favor of all of these claims—throughout this chapter I use the arguments of these critics to illustrate responses that might plausibly have been held by Aeschylus' ancient audience. In this regard, this chapter is something of a "meta-study."

2004: 12).[390] This study examines how the play uses apparently contradictory indications regarding the Danaids to draw the audience in and create uncertainty going into the next play. It details how the audience's response to the Danaids might shift in response to shifting evidence.

Painted in broad strokes, the portrayal of the Danaids progresses in the following way: spectators are aligned with the Danaids from the beginning and through most of the play. They begin with a sympathetic appeal that attempts to win the audience's allegiance to them. From there, their sympathetic status slowly deteriorates. Their interaction with their father points to the artificial nature of appeals to sympathy, and doubts regarding their claims arise in their encounter with Pelasgus. Their extreme behavior in pressing Pelasgus to accept them as suppliants undercuts their status as victims and indirectly sows doubts about their account of the Aegytpids. And their subsequent exploitation of the Argives with the help of Pelasgus underscores the theme of audience manipulation. Yet just as the Danaids' account of their situation comes most in question, the behavior of the Egyptian Herald appears to confirm everything they have said about the Aegyptids and potentially reaffirms spectators' faith in them. The Herald's encounter with Pelasgus, however, again points to problems in the Danaids' story. The Danaids' final encounter with Danaus raises new questions, suggesting that Danaus has been operating behind the scenes. In the final song, the Danaids consider the possibility that marriage to the Aegyptids may be ordained by Zeus. In this way, the play looks

[390] The fact that one of these views of the Danaids would undoubtedly be proven "correct" by the discovery of the other plays in the trilogy does not change the *Suppliants*' fundamentally ambiguous portrayal of the Danaids. An open-ended depiction would also be appropriate if the *Suppliants* is the second play of the trilogy (cf. the conclusion of *Choephori*), though I see no reason why the *Suppliants* cannot be the first. For the *Suppliants* as the second play of the trilogy, see the recent arguments of Rösler and Sommerstein addressed below.

forward to the traditional conclusion of the story while leaving spectators in suspense as to how this conclusion might actually look. And moments before the Aegyptids will presumably take the stage in the next play of the trilogy, the outcome of events is made to depend entirely on the nature of the Aegyptids, which has been at issue throughout the *Suppliants*.

Before proceeding with a detailed analysis of this progression, it is necessary to address two fundamentally different ways that spectators could have viewed the events depicted in the *Suppliants* that would crucially affect how they responded to the Danaids. On the one hand, spectators who were unfamiliar with the myth or who were able put it out of their minds could have viewed the play on its own terms as the story of a group of young women seeking refuge from their pursuers. They would interpret the actions and events of the play as they unfold. Those who knew the Danaids' story would have been more likely to view this play as the first installment in the treatment of the myth of the Danaids, who will marry and then murder these pursuers on their wedding night. These spectators would likely see the play as preparation for the impending murder and would, for obvious reasons, have been suspicious of everything the Danaids do. They might nevertheless be curious as to how and why Aeschylus' Danaids will kill the Aegyptids and thus alert to any sign that the Danaids will end up marrying them despite indications to the contrary.

The first production of the *Suppliants* probably saw both kinds of viewers. Before Aeschylus, we know that the Danaid myth was treated by Hesiod (M-W 127-129) and in an epic poem, the Δαναίδες.[391] Phrynichus, Aeschylus' immediate predecessor on the

[391] See Garvie 1969: 177-9 for a discussion of Aeschylus' possible sources.

tragic stage, produced his own Δαναίδες and Αἰγύπτιοι (*TrGF* I F 1, 1a; 4).[392] And these are only the previous treatments for which we have evidence; like any other myth, the story could have been circulated not only in literary and plastic sources which could survive to our day,[393] but also in the home, in schools, and in oral performances. Thus, it is quite possible, though not certain, that most of Aeschylus' audience would have been familiar with the Danaids' story at least in outline.[394] The degree to which this knowledge would have informed their viewing experience is another question. The possibility of innovation and inevitable shifts in emphasis on the part of Aeschylus would deter those acquainted with the myth from considering the developments in *Suppliants* and the other plays a foregone conclusion.[395] As suggested above, spectators already familiar with the myth might even have intentionally held this information in the back of their minds in order to enjoy Aeschylus' production. For the purposes of this chapter, I will assume that while spectators were generally able to immerse themselves in the events portrayed onstage, they were also receptive to allusions to the traditional myth and their responses open to the influence of more obvious references.

[392] See Garvie 1969: 131 n.3, 138-9, 180.
[393] See Keuls 1986 for the visual evidence of the Danaid myth. Depictions of the myth date predominantly to the 4th century. A Chian chalice depicting a woman holding a man's severed head and an Attic Stamnos depicting a man surrounded by fleeing women may represent scenes from the myth and may predate or be contemporary with the production of the *Suppliants*.
[394] We have next to no decisive evidence for the form of the myth before Aeschylus. This hardly proves, however, that Aeschylus was the first to treat the myth in the form that we have it.
[395] From the fragments, the Δαναίδες appears to have represented the Danaids as amazon-like warriors who defeat the Aegyptids in battle in contrast to the frightened and submissive Danaids who take the stage in Aeschylus' play.

I. THE DANAIDS' PRAYER:

AN IMPLICIT ARGUMENT AND POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

With its claims of innocence, signs of desperation and vehement rejections of the Aegyptids, the Danaids' opening prayer to Zeus and the other gods invites the audience to pity the Danaids and feel enmity toward the Aegyptids. This appeal is helped by spectators' strict alignment with the Danaids and their cause. The Danaids' suppliant status, hard-to-pin-down circumstances and obscure motives are likely to have piqued the audience's curiosity about them. The opening song suggests a number of possible explanations of their actions: extreme hatred of the Aegyptids, aversion to marriage and sexuality, dynastic struggles, and a desire to emulate a distant ancestress. None of these explanations are, however, decisive. From the outset, allusions to the murder of the Aegyptids abound.

I.1 PRELIMINARIES: SUPPLICATION

Before anthing else is known about them, the fact that the Danaids are suppliants on the run would excite spectators' curiosity.[396] Greek mythology, literature, and history are replete with suppliants' stories both sympathetic and sordid.[397] The Danaids'

[396] The dramatic effectiveness of the suppliant plot may be reflected in the frequency with which it was presented on the tragic stage. That the Danaids are suppliants of the gods would quickly become apparent to the audience.

[397] On the prevalence of supplication in ancient Greece, see Gould 1973: 74, *passim*, Naiden 2000: 15. Cf. the historical instances of supplication cited by Forrest 1960 and Podlecki 1966 (Themistocles' appeal to the Argives after his ostracism in Athens), Sommerstein 1997 (the Spartan Pericleidas' appeal to Cimon and the Athenians during the uprising of the Messenians) as influences upon the *Suppliants*. See also Garvie 1969: 154, 154 n.4, who discusses the possibility that Aeschylus had in mind Aristagoras' appeal to the Athenians prior to the Ionian revolt. The list of suppliants in archaic literature is extensive. See Naiden 2000: 61 n.18 and 19 for a list of murderers who sought purification prior to supplication. Naiden 2000: 131 observes that "[a]s Aristotle says, the Athenian assembly entertained supplications once a month, making for dozens if not hundreds every year" (Ath. Pol. 43.6).

reticence, here and elsewhere, regarding the circumstances that led to their flight and their motives for doing so would only increase the speculation of audience members, who would undoubtedly be evaluating them in this song, though the Danaids are making their case to the gods.[398] The fundamental question regarding the Danaids' position is whether spectators would expect the Danaids, as suppliants, to divulge freely more information about themselves.[399] In other words, would the Danaids' silence be suspect?[400] The views of Naiden and Rösler give us a sense of the range of possibilities. According to Rösler, the Danaids silence would not be considered inappropriate. He argues primarily on the basis of literary examples that the institution of supplication "demands no more of them than that [suppliants] can give a plausible account of the immediate circumstances of their plea, that is to say their actual plight" (2007: 167-7). Rösler is satisfied that the Danaids have met their burden when they explain that the Aegyptids pursue them and insist that they had not been exiled for a crime involving bloodshed (7). They would therefore be "allowed to keep silent about what they cannot or will not say" (2007: 167).[401] An Athenian audience, he implies, would also be satisfied with respect to the

[398] Cairns 1993: 183 argues that "[t]he Danaids adopt the part of suppliants immediately on entering the orchestra, even though they do not take up position at the altar until 207 ff., and despite the absence of any representative of the Argives; in the opening lines of the play, then, their supplication is directed towards enlisting the support of the gods, especially Zeus, for their cause." They ask Zeus to look upon them favorably (1-2) and, along with the city, its waters, and the gods above and below, to accept their supplication (27-9). Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 6 observes that they appeal to Zeus in the guise best suited to suppliants: (ἀφίκτωρ (1), "who watches over suppliants" and σωτήρ (26), "savior"). They bear the trappings of a suppliant, namely the olive branch with wool (21-2) and, as befits a suppliant, they assure the god that they have no blood on their hands (6). See Naiden 2000: 60 on the "unworthiness" of suppliants who have committed a murder for which they have yet to be purified. In form, at least, their appeal seems to be proper.

[399] Obviously the Danaids are not supplicating Aeschylus' audience, but spectators would undoubtedly evaluate their case.

[400] Cf. in particular the much more extensive explanation that Orestes offers to Athena at *Eu.* 443-469.

[401] Rösler relies heavily on Odysseus' supplication of Arete and Alcinous in *Odyssey* 6. Parallels from the *Odyssey* lead Rösler to suggest that a suppliant would not even have to give a name. Vickers 1973: 439, who suggests that ""Although we have seen some instances of a fugitive or polluted man being refused

Danaids' ritual obligations, if not with regard to their own curiosity. Naiden, on the other hand, emphasizes the practical side of supplication, with which many Athenians would have had personal experience from the Assembly (*Ath. Pol*. 43.6; cf. Naiden 2000: 131). He adduces a number of instances in which a person or community denies suppliants on the basis of their unworthiness without incurring charges of impiety (Naiden 2000: ch. 2).[402] "Legal innocence," he argues, is "intrinsic to the argument that the suppliant is worthy" (Naiden 2004: 75). Petitioners who properly performed the ritual of supplication and were accepted as suppliants could not subsequently be denied without incurring legal or divine punishment (Parker 1983: 185).[403] Yet, in many cases, the supplicated party would simply deny the "unworthy" petitioner suppliant status (Naiden 2000: 89-90). Thus, it was of the utmost importance for supplicated parties to determine the worthiness of potential suppliants before taking them in (cf., in this regard, Pelasgus' questioning of the Danaids at 326-39).[404] In the end, there was most likely no one Athenian view of supplication that spectators could have imposed upon any situation presented to them. It may be best to suppose that, between literary and real-world precedents, spectators could

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asylum, it is seldom in Greek myth, history, or tragedy that we find a suppliant being turned away, and when it does happen it is usually a disgrace to the host." Cf. also Gould 1973: 78, who suggests that the rights of suppliants cannot be violated if they follow the proper procedure and Zeitlin 1992: 211, who says that "whatever the details, suppliants, as a general category, have the god on their side."

[402] According to Naiden, "supplication embraces religious, moral, and legal factors that make rejection not only justifiable but common" (94). Unworthy suppliants include unpurified murders, those hateful to the gods, often because of an act of impiety, those who "violate friendship or family feeling, or who are enemies," criminals, and those who supplicate "under false pretenses," (60-82). This last category is particularly meaningful in the case of the Danaids. Failure to perform properly the acts associated with supplication could also prevent success. See Naiden 2004: 54-60 and Gould 1973: 78, who discusses the "gamesmanship" involved in attempts at supplication.

[403] See Naiden 2000: 226 for a list of the punishments inflicted on those who betray their pledges to suppliants.

[404] This was particularly the case in the Athenian Assembly, for instance, where the process of supplication included inquiries into the worthiness of the suppliant. According to Naiden 2000: 87, it is common for the supplicated party to consider any possible "threat, whether to his purity, his values, or his prestige" posed by a suppliant.

have been led to believe in a world where either one of these views of supplication held sway and would therefore look to cues in the play to determine which view applies in this case.

I.2 The Danaids' Case against the Aegyptids

A look at the Danaids' prayer to the gods and their later appeal to the Argives suggests that they do not take a successful supplication for granted (Vickers 1973: 453). The Danaids do not offer concrete evidence in their favor, but they present an argument that may have been calculated to appeal to many in Aeschylus' audience. Athenian law courts put a premium on the ability to evoke pity for oneself and anger toward one's enemies (Allen 2000: 148-51).[405] Objective facts were merely a means to achieving this end (Allen 2000: 148-9). Viewed in this way, the Danaids' case may be more "solid" than it initially appears. Their depiction of their pursuers appears to be aimed at offending the sensibilities of a Greek audience. According to the Danaids, the Aegyptids are a large band of men, who are out of control, mad with desire, and intent upon taking advantage of unwilling girls. The Danaids are reduced to tears at the mere thought of them, and they portray themselves as desperate and defenseless victims, running for their lives with nowhere to turn but to the gods and the home of a distant ancestor. The Danaids clearly lay out their role and that of the Aegyptids in the affair. Given an audience accustomed to emotional appeals and the almost nonexistent deliberative

[405] See pp. 148-9 on the subjectivity of Athenian lawcourts. See p. 378 n.8 for a list of exhortations to pity and anger in the orators.

process of Athenian juries, spectators might not have expected much more than this to reach a decision.[406]

The Danaids accuse the Aegyptids of being driven by unbridled lust to an ill-advised and single-minded pursuit of marriage and strengthen this claim with intimations of religious impropriety. The Danaids effectively convey the nature of their cousins by accusing them of *hybris*, a term "especially suitable to condemn criminal, sexually motivated, acts of insult committed by more powerful kin against their weaker relations" (Fisher 1992: 269, MacDowell 1976: 17).[407] The Aegyptids are a ἑσμὸν ὑβριστὴν (30), a "*hybristic* swarm." At the prospect of marriage to the Danaids, their *hybris* grows in their "implacable minds" (δυσπαραβούλοις φρεσίν), and they are driven ceaselessly[408] by this "mad intention" (διάνοιαν μαινόλιν) (106-110).[409] Thus, the Danaids' account suggests that the Aegyptids have been overcome by lust and wish, improperly, to put the Danaids at their disposal through marriage. The Danaids' characterization of the proposed marriage, however, suggests that the Aegyptids may be guilty of even greater offenses. According to the Danaids, the marriage is a crime not only against them but also against the gods: it is impious (ἀσεβῆ, 9) and forbidden by Themis (37). *Hybris* can, in addition to describing offenses against humans, apply to offenses against the gods,

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[406] For evidence that an audience would be expected to respond in this way to the Danaids' situation and that it would lead the audience to decide in the Danaids' favor, cf. Pelasgus' words to this effect at lines 486-488. See Murray 1958: 28 for the power of the Aegyptids and relative powerlessness of the Danaids.
[407] *Hybris* was illegal in Athens (Dem. 21.47), though it is not clear that the Danaids' use of the term would conform to the legal definition of the term. See MacDowell 1976: 24, who notes that the Athenian law does not define the term, taking it for granted that its meaning was clear.
[408] This is at least one way to understand κέντρον ἔχων ἄφυκτον. Johansen-Whittle I 1980, *loc cit*., note that the image of the goad may cut both ways. It may refer to the sexual act which the Egyptians intend for the Danaids or for the sexual desire by which they are beset. See also Seaford 1987: 112-3.
[409] The end result is the same whether one attributes this "mad intention" to *hybris* or to a subject in the corrupt line that follows. The manuscript suggests that that the possessor of the mad intent and the inescapable goad (i.e., the subject of ἐχων may be ἄτα (with ι in rasura), "ruin."

specifically in the form of disobedience (MacDowell 1976: 19-20). Although the Danaids appear to use the term primarily with regard to the Aegytpids' behavior toward them, spectators attuned to the religious implications of the Aegyptids' actions might, in light of the accusations of impiety, consider this aspect of the term take the term.[410] Of course, the Danaids neither justify nor explain these claims, and one might suppose that they are simply trying to denounce the marriage in the strongest possible terms. Nevertheless, in conjunction with the accusations of *hybris*, the Danaids' claim gives the impression, or at least leaves open the possibility, that the Aegyptids are not only victimizing a group of girls but also transgressing divine laws as yet unidentified.

The Danaids invite the audience's sympathy by presenting themselves as defenseless victims and implying that their cause is just. At this stage there is no obvious reason to doubt them.[411] They primarily use visceral means to communicate their desperation in the face of the Aegyptids. They punctuate their song with weeping, wailing, and tearing at their cheeks (cf. 69-71, 112-6), expressions of grief that were no doubt reflected in their movements and in their singing. Their fear is such that they would prefer death to marrying the Aegyptids (154-61). The fact that they complain of their treatment in a prayer to Zeus the gods of Argos might be thought to guarantee that their suffering is undeserved. Some might have dismissed their pious praise of Zeus (86-90, 91-5, 96-103) as the kind of thing one would expect in the context of a request for his aid. One might even dismiss their prayer to him in his capacity as protector of the homes of ὁσίοι ἀνδρές (26-7), "pious men," as an argument that they themselves are pious. Yet

[410] This sense may be strengthened by the fact that the Danaids are asking Zeus to take heed of the Aegyptids' *hybris* (cf. 104).
[411] The fact that they are the first people we see in the performance may tend to increase sympathy for them. See Heath 1987: 90ff.

when they ask the gods to hear their prayers "looking to justice, refusing improper satisfaction (τέλειον…παρ᾽ αἶσαν) to the young, and readily hating *hybris*" (78-81), it would be particularly brazen if they were not at least partially convinced of the truth of their claims. Most spectators would view lying or misrepresenting one's case in a prayer for help from the gods as, at best, counterproductive, if not downright dangerous.[412] Less obviously pious is the Danaids' threat that their death will bring reproach to Zeus if he and the other Olympians fail to heed them (168-74), but even this may have endeared the Danaids to audience members. The threat suggests a certain amount of confidence in their position, and spectators might have seen their forwardness as another indication of a desperation that gives their pleas the ring of truth.[413]

Viewers may also have been moved by the plight of Danaus, their father. Those unconvinced of the Danaids' claims or who see too much of themselves in the Danaids' lustful pursuers might still have sided with their father, with whom the mostly male audience might more easily identify. The Danaids are careful to clarify that they are not unattached women who flee marriage despite their parents' wishes, women upon whom many in the audience might look with disdain.[414] It was in fact their father, making the best of a bad situation (κύδιστ᾽ ἀχέων), who decided that they should flee (11-14).[415] Thus, the audience can be assured that Danaus also opposes to the marriage, or at least

[412] This does not, of course, rule out the possibility that their view of the events is distorted.
[413] Cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 127: "The necessity felt by the Danaids of reinforcing their argument by threatening so directly the supreme deity of the heavens suggests a kind of close 'Homeric' relationship between men and gods widely different from the huge distance indicated earlier by the reflections on Zeus' power…"
[414] Women's suitors would generally be chosen for them, and, though a woman might express her lack of affection for the suitor whom her parents have chosen (see Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 183), it would be unthinkable for her to disobey her family in order to avoid the union.
[415] Their independent nature is, however, often stressed. See, e.g., Garvie 1969: 171.

supports his daughters in their opposition to it.[416] It follows, then, that he too is a victim of the Aegyptids. The Danaids may refer specifically to this fact when they complain that the Aegyptids intend to σφετερίζειν πατραδέλφειαν (38). πατραδέλφειαν is a hapax, and its exact meaning is uncertain. It is an abstract noun that suggests "things to do with an uncle," and though the term is generally taken to mean cousin,[417] it may refer more obviously to the "rights of an uncle" (see Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 36-7). If so, the Danaids would be drawing attention to the fact that the Aegyptids' insistence upon marriage despite the resistance of their uncle Danaus is a violation of his authority (see below).[418]

I.3 Motives and Circumstances

The Danaids' evident fear and desperation and their portrayal of the Aegyptids invite the audience to pity the Danaids and feel enmity toward the Aegyptids. Nevertheless, questions about the circumstances of their flight, exacerbated by their failure to address them, remain. Among others that spectators might have considered, is it merely lust that motivates the Aegyptids? Why *exactly* do the Danaids refuse to marry them? What forced the Danaids and their father to flee Egypt? Already in its first song, the *Suppliants* offers conflicting indications that support multiple answers to these questions. In the section that follows I examine accounts of the Danaids and their situation that have been proposed by previous scholars in order to demonstrate the

[416] Danaus confirms this at line 227.
[417] Sandin 2003: 58 calls it "a sort of 'patronymic abstract', actually meaning 'cousinhood'."
[418] The meaning of σφετερίζειν ranges from simply taking possession of something, to "unlawfully appropriating" it. The latter meaning is generally preferred in this context for obvious reasons. Cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 36 who take it in this way but note that this usage is first attested only in the 4th century. They argue that this use of σφετερίζειν predates its first attestation on the basis of the persistent nature of legal language.

different ways in which the evidence presented in the first song can be interpreted. I then reevaluate these arguments based upon the evidence available to the audience viewing the play and show how the song presents a multi-layered picture of the Danaids that heightens the audience's interest in them and their curiosity regarding their underlying nature and creates suspense as to how their nature will express itself as the play proceeds.

Taken at face value, the Danaids' account can be made to answer all of the questions that it poses with only a modicum of circular reasoning. The Aegyptids are mad with lust, bent upon using the Danaids for their satisfaction, and willing to pursue the Danaids in the face of obvious resistance. And it would be precisely for these reasons that the Danaids and their father reject them as suitors. They are forced to flee Egypt when the Aegyptids prove that they will stop at nothing to achieve the marriage. This explanation is consistent with the Danaids' only explicit allusion to their motive as it is generally understood by modern critics. The Danaids contrast "external and internal causes" (Mackinnon 1978: 76, Garvie 1969: 221.) when they claim that they were not exiled by a vote of the city; their flight from the Aegyptids is rather an αὐτογενῆ φυξανορίαν (4-10),[419] a "flight from men" that is "self-produced," i.e., "by their own choice."[420] The Danaids claim that they have chosen to flee the Aegyptids for personal reasons, and this is certainly in keeping with a hatred of the Aegyptids. Yet "personal reasons" is a broad heading under which any number of motives can be filed. In light of their failure to expand on this assertion, and given its placement early in the play, one

[419] The manuscript reading is αὐτογένητον φυλαξάνοραν with λα in rasura. Bamberger's emendation, αὐτογενεῖ φυξανορίαι is a variation of Turnebus' αὐτογενῆ and Ahrens' φυξανορίαν which makes fucanori/an an internal accusative of geu/gomen (5). Page prints it in his addition as do Johansen and Whittle. For a discussion of these readings see Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 12-15, Lesky 1983a: 68.
[420] Cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 13-4, Conacher 1996: 81 von Fritz 1962: 161, Ireland 1974: 25, Lesky 1983a: 63, Makinnon 1978: 76, Macurdy 1944: 98, Rösler 2007: 179, and Sandin 2003: 42.

might understand it as an indication of what is to come. The Danaids' motive is not just personal in the sense that it is their own. It will remain concealed within them through much of the play, only to be guessed at by other characters and by their external audience.

I.3.A AVERSE TO THE AEGYPTIDS OR TO MEN AND MARRIAGE

At times the Danaids' aversion to marriage is focused on the Aegyptds. At other times, they appear to be averse to the very idea of marriage. According to Wilamowitz, the Danaids explain at the outset that they hate all men, not merely the Aegyptids, of whom their hatred is merely a sympton of the greater problem (Wilamowitz 1914: 15, Spier 1962: 316). He translates the Danaids' claim that they flee marriage αὐτογενῆ φυξανορίαν with the phrase "aus angeborener Männerfeindshaft," "because of an in-born hatred of men" (Wilamowitz (1914: 15).[421] Wilamowitz's translation of "in-born" for αὐτογενής is usually dismissed,[422] but the suggestion that the Danaids may harbor an aversion to all men and, by extension, marriage in any form is harder to ignore. In the first part of the song the Danaids specify the Aegyptids as the object of their aversion, but their prayers to Artemis near its conclusion and desire to flee unmarried (141-3, see blow) leave open the possibility of a general aversion to marriage and sexuality in general. I argue that the tension between these two views, which is evident in the first

[421] Wilamowitz actually read αὐτογεῖ φυξανορίαι, but it is hard to see what difference this makes.
[422] Most critics now accept the rejection of this interpretation by von Fritz 1962: 161.

song, but also runs through much of the play, is not accidental. It makes the Danaids' position fundamentally ambiguous and must be taken seriously.[423]

In the first part of their song, the Danaids make potentially ambiguous statements of aversion, but quickly put them into the context of marriage to the Aegyptids. At line 8 they speak of a flight from *men* but immediately express their hatred for the Aegyptids in the following lines (cf. von Fritz 1962: 161).[424] A closer look at lines 104-111 reveals that the Danaids' accusation of *hybris* against the Aegyptids is indirect: they ask Zeus to look upon "human *hybris*" (ὕβριν βρότειον). It seems as though the Danaids must be speaking of the Aegyptids when they refer to the *hybris* that grows at the prospect of *their* marriage and offer details that conform to their description of Aegyptids elsewhere.[425] The Danaids' prayer that the gods look to justice, restrain the unbounded desires of youth, and hate *hybris* (79-82) is also general, but references to youth and *hybris* point to the Aegyptids. The Danaids' suggestion in the next line that marriage would be just (πέλοιτ' ἄν ἔνδικος γάμος)[426] if the gods heed these prayer implies that they are not opposed to marriage in all of its forms.[427]

Later in the song, however, the Danaids express a more unequivocal resistance to marriage. They pray that they flee the beds of men (εὐνάς ἀνδρῶν) and remain unmarried (ἄγαμον) and unconquered (ἀδάματον, 141-3 = 151-30). No allusion to

[423] Numerous attempts have been made to explain it away. See in particular Johansen-Whittle I 1980 and Ireland 1974: *passim*.
[424]. It is still possible, however, to understand the expression of hatred to be a specification of the general aversion. The second half of line 11, which has fallen out, might have clarified the situation.
[425] One could argue that they are referring to the *hybris* that they has grown in all of the men who have considered marrying them, but of course they have not mentioned any other proposals.
[426] This reading is preferred by Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 78. Page prints πέλοιτ' ἄν ἔνδικοι γάμος with the gods understood as the subject of the address. The effect is the same.
[427] It is possible that they are speaking here in the abstract of the possibility of marriage for others, not themselves.

Aegyptids appears in the vicinity of this prayer to limit its reference,[428] and their characterization of marriage as an act of domination to be avoided implies a negative conception of the institution as a whole.[429] This impression would have been confirmed in the minds of many spectators when the Danaids subsequently align themselves with Artemis, ἁγνά Διός κόρα, the "chaste daughter of Zeus," and pray to her in her capacity as a virgin goddess (ἄδμητος) to aid them as virgins (ἀδμήται) and insure that they remain so (144-150). A prayer to Artemis would not commit a girl to indefinite virginity,[430] and the Danaids may simply be praying to escape this particular marriage and remain virgins for the moment. Yet taken together, the statements of general aversion to men, the valorization of virginity, and the prayer to Artemis give the impression that the Danaids resistance to marriage runs deeper than their hatred for the Aegyptids. Viewed in this light, the Danaids' distinction between themselves and the Aegyptids on the basis of gender (τὸν θηλυγενῆ στόλον…ἀρσενοπληθῆ…ἑσμὸν, 28-30) may also have taken on greater meaning.[431]

The question of whether the Danaids' aversion to marriage is general or specific is not an idle one. The Danaids' relationship to marriage and sexuality has no bearing on the Danaids' present situation. They are fleeing the Aegyptids and the Aegyptids are pursuing them regardless of their particular motives. Their view of marriage could, however, drastically affect how spectators view them. The Danaids' ability to elicit sympathy might be greatly reduced if they oppose marriage in any form and consider sex

[428] The closest reference to Aegyptids occurs at 111; the closest reference to them by name, at 30.
[429] According to Lesky 1983a: 68, direct evidence that this passage refers to marriage with the Aegyptids in particular can only be found in later passages (393 and 426) "in which the concrete reference is clear."
[430] This is particularly clear in coming of age ceremonies that center around Artemis such as the one at Brauron.
[431] Alaux 2001: 12-3 suggests that the Danaids believe that as men and women, the Aegyptids and themselves belong to different races.

an act of violence.[432] In a society where marrying, providing one's husband with a child, preferably a son, and taking care of the household are considered the most essential pursuits for women (cf. Pomeroy 1975: 57-92; Keuls 1993: 98-128; Seaford 2001: 106, Lévi 2001: 42), few would consider an aversion to men and a desire for perpetual virginity an acceptable motive for a woman, regardless of how sincerely she wished for them (Lévy 2001: 42). Even those who were especially sympathetic to the plight of women (including women, if they were present in the audience) might have empathized with the Danaids' position, but recognized that this was also hopelessly unrealistic.[433] Spectators who were married or who had daughters might understand the girls' position and even feel pity for these girls who are obviously scared and desperate,[434] but they could not take their motive seriously. The Danaids' accusations of *hybris* would certainly have to be viewed in a different light. Some might even stand behind men who seek to bring the girls back within the acceptable range of female behavior. It is unlikely that Danaus' support for the Danaids' rejection of marriage on these grounds would make the audience more comfortable with their position. More likely it would raise questions regarding Danaus' fitness as a father.

Yet despite the impact it might have on the audience's judgment of them, the Danaid's relationship to marriage and sexuality is left uncertain. Spectators need to know

[432] Cf. Zeitlin 1992: 205, who suggests that the Danaids possess among other things a "virginal aversion to the idea of marriage itself as a form of violence and subjugation that, starting with defloration, delivers them against their will to the power of men…"
[433] For the often unpleasant realities of Greek marriage for women, see, e.g., Pomeroy 1975: 57-92 and 1988: 1333-42, Keuls 1993: 98-128.
[434] Cf. Seaford 2001: 106, 110, who notes the difficulties that women faced in making the transition to married life and suggests that "[t]he attitude of the Danaids resembles in several respects the attitude associated with the Greek bride or her female companions, but taken to an exotic extreme." The frequency with which goddesses, women, and girls request and receive virginity may also have made the idea seem less unconventional when presented in tragedy.

whether the Danaids hate the Aegyptids or all men in order to accurately assess their claims, yet when the song closes, both views are tenable. Concluding that their aversion is specific requires that spectators ignore the indications of general aversion at the end of the song or consider them an exaggeration of the Danaids' particular aversion (Garvie 1969: 222). On the other hand, although there is no unequivocal evidence of a general aversion, nothing in the explicitly contradicts this view.[435] Spectators still may have suspected that it lurks behind the Danaids' rejection of the Aegyptids. Many spectators may have registered that there is an issue regarding the Danaids' relationship to marriage and sexuality, but reserved judgment on the issue until they know more.

I.3.B FAMILY TROUBLE

Among those who hold that the Danaids' aversion is specific are critics who argue that kinship issues lie at the heart of their problem. According to Thomson, the Danaids say as much in their aforementioned statement of motive. He reads αὐτογενῆ with γάμον in the next line so that the Danaids are fleeing the Aegyptids because they abhor (ὀνοταζόμεναι) and consider impious a "marriage of the same race" (Thomson 1973: 290).[436] Few subsequent critics accept "of the same race" as the primary meaning of αὐτογενῆ, but, taken with φυξανορίαν, αὐτογενῆ may contain a secondary allusion to the relationship between the Danaids and Aegyptids in the context of the Danaids' aversion to them (e.g., "a flight from men of the same race").[437] The other allusion to the

[435] Only the Danaids allusion to the possibility of "just marriage" argues against this judgment.
[436] See also Thomson 1971: 25-30, although he emends his reading of the rest of the line.
[437] Lévy 2001: 34-5 supports this reading. Garvie 1969: 218, MacKinnon 1978: 76 and Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 34 reject this reading outright. Conacher 1996: 81, Griffith 1986: 330, and Fisher 1992: 264

Danaids' family connection to the Aegyptids in the Danaids' song, πατραδέλφειαν (see above),[438] occurs in the context of the Aegyptids mounting the Danaids' beds and may thus have strengthened the argument for an association between the Danaids' aversion to the Aegyptids and their relationship to them.[439]

An Athenian audience is unlikely to have suspected that the Danaids reject the Aegyptids because they consider marriage between first cousins incestuous (cf. the scholiast at 37, Ridgeway 1910, Sandin 2003: 58). In Athens, such marriages were not only legal but also common.[440] Spectators would therefore need very clear indication that the Danaids hold such an unusual view. Lévy argues that the religious language with which the Danaids condemn the marriage (ἀσεβῆ, 9; θέμις εἴργει, 37) is consistent with that used to condemn brother-sister and parent-child incest, but acknowledges that this is by no means the only possible explanation (Lévy 2001: 33, *passim*).[441] Thomson asserts that the Danaids do not reject the Aegyptids as cousins but reject instead the kind of relationship entailed by marriage between relatives as defined by Athenian laws of inheritance.[442] When Danaus died, the Danaids would, in the absence of male siblings,

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acknowledge the possibility of a secondary reference to kinship. Ireland 1974: 25 and Sandin 2003 consider the possibility but are skeptical.

[438] This is a reference to the family connection whether it refers to an uncle or cousin.

[439] Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 34. Johansen and Whittle note, however, that the association is diluted by the mention of the Danaids' unwillingness to marry and of the prohibition of *Themis* in this passage.

[440] Cf. Ridgeway 1910: 190, von Fritz 1962: 162, Thomson 1973: 289, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 59-60, De Bouvrie 1990: 151-2. Lévi 2001: 30, 31, maintains that it was the most common form of marriage in Athens and cites W. E. Thomson, "The Marriage of First Cousins in Athenian Society," *Phoenix* 21 1967: 273-282. Spier 1962: 315 notes the frequency with which cousins are married in Greek Mythology. Given its history of marriage between siblings in the royal family, it is unlikely an Athenian audience would consider the possibility that cousin marriage was wrong in mythical Egypt. Cf. Thomson 1973: 289.

[441] Lévy argues that *themis* in particular was used of universal prohibitions. For Thomson 1973: 291 the religious language represents strong distaste: "[t]he Danaides hate the marriage *because* it is unholy, and it is unholy because, for the sake of the accompanying inheritance, the sons of Aigyptos are seeking to marry within the kin."

[442] According to Thomson 1973: 289, "[t]hat is the light in which the dispute would inevitably have been regarded by a contemporary audience."

inherit his property and could be claimed, along with the property, by Danaus' next-of-kin (Ridgeway 1910: 190, Thomson 1973: 289; cf. Garvie 1969: 216-8). If this is the situation in the play, one might suppose that the Danaids fear that the Aegyptids only want them for the inheritance and will dispose of them as soon as they have possession of it (Thomson 1973: 290-3, Mackinnon 1978: 78). Thomson bases his claim on a later passage (the Danaids' dialogue with Pelasgus at 333-39, on which see below). At this stage there is little concrete evidence to support it. The Danaids make no mention of inheritance or property here or elsewhere in the play, and this explanation requires that one ignore the sexual overtones in the Danaids' rejections and the evidence that they oppose marriage in general.

External knowledge may, however, have led audience members to consider the possibility of a dispute over property. In almost every other account of the myth that we know of, the Danaids' flight results from a quarrel between Danaus and his brother, Aegyptus, and Aeschylus' spectators may have been familiar with this version of the myth.[443] The quarrel is not mentioned directly in the play,[444] but the Danaids allude to problems in Egypt that Danaus was forced to handle (12-13), and a dispute between the Danaids and the Aegyptids would clearly represents a rift in Egypt's royal family. Spectators may therefore have suspected that the Aegyptids' desire to marry the Danaids is not just a family squabble but a political ploy to consolidate power in Egypt.

[443] Cf. Garvie 1969: 164, who discusses the accounts of the quarrel in Ps.-Apollodorus, Hyginus' Scholia to *Iliad* 1.42 and E. *Hec*. 886, and Servius. Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 33 notes that none of these sources are contemporary with Aeschylus.

[444] See Garvie 1969: 215, who points out that this makes the Danaids' failure to mention it even more striking. Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 33 dismisses the suggestion that a quarrel preceded the *Suppliants* because there is no mention of it in the play. Lesky 1983a: 67 also rejects this suggestion. Rösler 2007: 185 argues that the quarrel was presented in a preceding play.

The Danaids' kinship to the Aegyptids may have affected not only how they see the Aegyptids, but also how the audience sees them. Thomson argues that the audience would have disapproved of the Danaids' cause insofar as they are rejecting the Aegyptids' legal claim upon them as next-of-kin (Thomson 1973: 289, 292-3). Macurdy, however, has observed that the Danaids have not inherited because Danaus is not yet dead and that, according to Athenian law, Danaus "has the right to give his daughters in marriage to the man of his own choice…not necessarily to one who is next of kin" (1944: 95-6; cf. Thomson 1973: 278.[445] Danaus obviously opposes the union, and Macurdy argues that the Aegyptids are committing *hybris* and acting unjustly simply by ignoring his wishes (1944: 96).[446] Matters would be less straightforward in the event of Danaus' death. Although he could arrange another marriage for his daughters in a will, potential suitors have yet to be found (or were left behind in Egypt) when the *Suppliants* begins.[447] And if Danaus were to die with no other marriage on the horizon, it is not clear that the Aegyptids could be denied. Thus, spectators may have felt that the Aegyptids' kinship to the Danaids gives a firmer basis to their claims. As it stands, however, their claim is hardly undisputed or indisputable. Their kinship to the Danaids is just as likely to increase the audience's distaste for them on the grounds that, as next-of-kin, they would be expected to protect, rather than victimize, the Danaids (MacKinnon 1978: 79-80).

[445] Cf. the scholiast's interpretation of ὧν θέμις εἴργει at line 37, ὧν τὸ δίκαιον ἡμᾶς εἴργει διὰ τὸ μὴ θανατωθῆναι τὸν πατέρα, which may be understood to mean that the union is not right because their father is not yet dead, but see below. Macurdy also points out that a relative's right to marry an heiress was subject to the approval of the archon in Athens. Thomson 1973: 289 notes that they will

[446] One might add that even if the Aegyptids' claim were perfectly legal, it would not necessarily be sympathetic to the audience, especially if the Danaids' accusations are accurate.

[447] It is possible that this is Danaus' mission in coming to Argos.

I.3.C INFLUENTIAL ANCESTOR: THE INFLUENCE OF IO UPON THE DANAIDS

Murray has famously argued that the key to understanding the Danaids' motive is the myth of Io: their flight from marriage is a misguided attempt to emulate their ancient ancestress (1958: vii-viii, 15-6).[448] Murray may not have proved his case beyond a doubt, but the frequency with which the Danaids refer to Io in the first song alone demands an analysis of her function in the text (1958: 21-2). In the parodos they assert their connection to Argos through their descent from Zeus and Io (15-18). Over the course of their song the Danaids pray to her Io and Zeus's child, Epaphos, and allude to the circumstances of his birth (40-6). They promise to recount Io's story (49-57) and refer to her specifically in the context of escaping marriage (141-3 = 151-3). They mention Hera's hatred for Io in a prayer to Zeus (164-5). Finally, near the end of the song, they suggest that for Zeus to ignore them is tantamount to dishonoring his son, τὸν τᾶς βοὸς παῖδ[α] (168-74), "the son of the cow."[449] There is no doubt that these references to Io and her son help establish the Danaids' connection to Argos and their claim upon Zeus, both of which are essential to the success of their endeavor.[450] Yet the attention the Danaids devote to describing Io's union and her offspring points to a deeper interest in Io herself.

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[448] According to Murray, the Danaids imitate Io's "repugnance to the male" (60). Only Hypermnestra appreciates the fact that Io eventually becomes a wife and mother. Though in some ways ingenious, Murray's analysis of the *Suppliants* suffers from his overemphasis of the account of Io (with its negative portrayal of Zeus) in the *Prometheus Bound*.

[449] Murray 1958: 24 adds to the list of references to Io and her offspring the Danaids' indirect reference to Apis (129-32), the "Egyptian bull god and counterpart of Epaphus." See also Whittle 1964: 26 and Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 105.

[450] For the Danaids' use of Io as a claim upon Zeus, see Sommerstein 1996: 165-6 and Belfiore 2000: 45-6, who argues that the Danaids present Io's case as "precedent" for Zeus's intervention, a kind of hypomnesis. The Danaids as piling up reasons for Zeus to support their cause. Their personal connection strengthens their claim on Zeus who watches over suppliants.

At one point, the Danaids offer an explanation of how they will use Io's story as evidence. Though corrupt,[451] this passage is the best place to start for an idea of how the myth of Io functions in the text:

> ὅν τ' ἐπιλεξαμένα
> νῦν ἐν ποιονόμοις
> ματρὸς ἀρχαίας τόποις τῶν
> πρόσθε πόνων μνασαμένα,
> τάδε νῦν ἐπιδείξω
> πιστὰ τεκμήρια, γαιονόμοισι
> δ' ἄελπτά περ ὄντα φανεῖται
> γνώσεται δὲ λόγου τις ἐν μάκει.
>
> (49-57)
> and having singled him [Ephaphos] out too
> now in the places where my ancient mother grazed
> having recalled her former struggles
> I will now reveal these things
> as faithful proof, and to the locals
> it will appear unexpected though true
> and one will understand over the course of my tale

The Danaids promise to use the myth of Io to prove things that are surprising but true.[452] As Johansen and Whittle observe, this promise precisely foreshadows the Danaids' encounter with Pelasgos, in which he initially doubts but eventually accepts their connection to Argos on the basis of Io's story (274-327) (II 1980: 49-50; cf. Sandin 2003: 74). The impact of these words in their present context is, however, another matter. Spectators may very well have thought back to these words during the aforementioned scene with Pelasugus, but there is no way to predict their intentions from this passage.

[451] See Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 47-52; Sandin 2003: 72-6.
[452] Sandin 2003: 73-5 reads τὰ τε for τάδε in line 53 and argues that it is a relative (cf. his translation on page 21: "what I shall now show forth will appear as sure proof"), in which case the reference to Io's story need have nothing to do with the evidence that the Danaids will now reveal. This reading accounts for the problematic second νῦν (53), but fails to explain not only what the Danaids intend to prove but also what they will use as evidence.
it is difficult to know to what the Danaids are referring to

Thus we might conclude that it is intentionally suspenseful.[453] The Danaids do not specify what they will prove: they make no reference to their ancestry,[454] the only (indirect) reference to the Argives, γαιονόμοισι, is an uncertain emendation (See Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 50-1),[455] and τις in the final line suggests that the Danaids are not primarily concerned with the Argives' apprehension of their unexpected truth but with that of the play's audience; the Danaids announce to the spectators that they will use Io's story as evidence of something surprising that will only become clear in time.[456] With these words they invite the audience to be alert to references to Io and attempt to discern from them what exactly the Danaids will prove.

Even in the absence of an invitation, striking parallels coupled with significant differences in Io's story and the experience of the Danaids encourage speculation about their connection to one another. Both Io and the Danaids are pursued by powerful males, and in both cases they are forced to flee from their homelands across the space dividing Argos and Egypt. Yet whereas the Danaids' suitors are the cause of their suffering, Zeus is presented as a benevolent figure. He poses Io no threat and commits no crime against her. He is her savior. It is his jealous wife, the goddess Hera, who torments Io (cf. 162-7). The consummation of Zeus and Io's union, repeatedly described as a touch and a breeze (ἐξ ἐπαφῆς κἀξ ἐπιπνοίας, 17, 42-46), could not be more different than what the

[453] The cryptic nature of the statement may in fact account for the trouble this passage has caused scholiasts, copyists, and editors. See Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 50-1.
[454] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 50-1 favor Hermann's emendation γονέων to specify the purpose of the τεκμήρια.
[455] γαιονόμοισι is Hermann's emendation of the metrically impossible τά τ' ἀνόμοια οἰδ'. Sandin (2003), 73 is certainly exaggerating when he says that Hermann's emendation "is likely to have been what Aeschylus wrote."
[456] νῦν ἐπιδείσω suggests that the Danaids will reveal the proof presently but can also mean that they will do so on the present occasion, i.e., in the performance of the *Suppliants*. It difficult to take this as an encomiastic or "performative" future as defined by Bundy 1962: 20-2. See Pfeijffer 1999 for an attempt to do away with the concept altogether.

Danaids expect from the Aegyptids. And the conclusion of Zeus and Io's story is a happy one, whereas the Danaids' future with the Aegyptids remains very much in doubt (cf. Zeitlin 1992: 227). Given their account of Zeus in the myth of Io and the fact that they pray to him for aid, spectators might conclude that the Danaids' aversion to the Aegyptids either stems from or is exacerbated by their idealization of the Zeus, a standard with which the Aegyptids cannot hope to compare (cf. Caldwell 1974: 52-58). If the Danaids hope to emulate Io by avoiding all sexual contact (due to a misunderstanding of the myth) or by holding out for a marriage that does not exist in reality,[457] their position would be problematic for the same reasons as a general aversion to marriage. On the other hand, spectators would certainly understand if the Danaids hoped for a happy and fruitful marriage such as Io's rather than the one the Aegyptids propose.

Spectators may also have perceived an even deeper connection between the experiences of Io and the Danaids that would elevate the Danaids' story to the level of allegory so that it would lie outside the realm of social and sexual mores. Although the Danaids are being chased by the Aegyptids while Io was pursued by a gadfly sent by Hera (cf. 15-6), the Danaids repeatedly attribute fly-like characteristics to the Aegyptids. They are a ἑσμός, a "swarm,"[458] and have a κέντρον (110-1), a "goad" or "stinger," much

[457] Cf. Sommerstein 1996: 163, who holds a position similar to that of Murray 1958: he suggests that the Danaids consider it their birthright to avoid sex but come to this conclusion only by neglecting the obvious allusions to physical intimacy between Io and Zeus. According to Sommerstein, "Aeschylus…is going out of his way at this stage to associate Io firmly, right at the outset of her story, with the affirmation, not the rejection, of sexuality—an association which he then has the Danaids totally ignore." Cf. de Bouvrie 1990: 154-6. Alaux 2001: 12, 15 translates αὐτογενῆ φυξανορία "a hatred of males particular to our race," and offers it as evidence that they have adopted Io's view of sexuality.

[458] See Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 30, according to whom a ἑσμός "properly means a (settling) swarm of birds (cf. 223 [in which Danaus compares his daughters to a ἑσμός of doves])…or, more commonly, insects…"

like the gadfly's.[459] The reference to madness (μαινόλιν) in this context may also "bring to mind the goading of the maddened Io" (Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 97).[460] The identification of the Aegyptids with Hera's gadfly offers a satisfying parallel and, potentially, an explanatory tool: the gadfly and the Aegyptids are go-betweens; Io's and the Danaids' real struggle is against marriage, in the form of its divine representative and embodiment for Io, for the Danaids, the threat of an actual marriage.[461] Of course there is no indication how the connection will resolve itself at this time. The audience has heard nothing of Argos, Hermes, or the means by which Hera's anger is appeased in Io's story.[462] For now, one might predict that both Io and the Danaids will continue to oppose the representatives of marriage until someone from above or elsewhere intervenes on their behalf.[463] The audience, as the Danaids say, will understand in time. For the moment, it may strike some spectators as inauspicious that the Danaids are, by identifying with Io, placing themselves in opposition to Hera, who is not only the goddess of marriage, but the patron goddess of Argos, the city to which they have fled for safety.

I.3.D SAVING DANAUS FROM HIS ORACLE

Sicherl argues that accusations of *hybris* and impiety conceal Danaus and the Danaids' real purpose. They reject the marriage because an oracle has foretold that Danaus will be killed by his son-in-law (1986: *passim*). There is no evidence for this

[459] See, however, Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 97 on the potential ambiguity of the phrase (whether the Aegyptids actually possess a goad or are themselves goaded).
[460] See Belfiore 2000: 57 for an extended list of parallels between the suitors and the gadfly.
[461] See Pfister 1988: 179 on "personification" in drama.
[462] The fact that Io's guard and the city to which the Danaids flee for safety share the same name is at least interesting.
[463] See Murray 1958: 15, 42, 48-9, 63-4, 78 who describes the myth of Io as an "allegory" for the Danaids' actions but identifies the suitors not with Hera but with Zeus in his reading.

view in the Danaids' first song or in the play; Sicherl relies on external evidence for the oracle (1986: 88-94).[464] He asserts, however, that the scholiast of the *Suppliants* is aware of the tradition, as evidenced by the comment on λέκτρων ὧν θέμις εἴργει, "beds which *themis* forbids," at line 37. The scholion explains: διὰ τὸ μὴ θανατωθῆναι τὸν πατέρα. Sicherl understands this to mean that the marriage is forbidden "in order that their father not be killed" (1986: 92).[465] Perhaps more convincing than the evidence Sicherl adduces is the explanatory power of his thesis. It accounts for the Danaids' uniform opposition to marrying the Aegyptids and explains why the Danaids would conceal their true motive (1986: 97-8). According to Sicherl, the audience is not supposed to know what motivates the Danaids in the first plays of the trilogy until the oracle is revealed in the final play and they are forced to reassess the Danaids in light of it (1986: 98.).[466] If Sicherl is correct, the audience will have had no inkling of the oracle at this stage in the production. After learning of its existence, spectators might have been torn in retrospect between approving the Danaids' filial piety and questioning the Danaids', and particularly their father's, attempt to avoid a fate that had already been decreed. They might also have questioned the Danaids' denying the Aegyptids and

[464] Evidence for this tradition does not appear in major sources for the myth and is limited to Scholia in the *Iliad*, Euripides' *Orestes*, and in Statius' *Thebais*.
[465] See, however, Garvie 2004: 11-2 who observes that there are no cases in *koine* where διὰ is used with an articular infinitive to express purpose, being generally used to express cause: "because the father has not been killed." Sicherl 1986: 94 and Rösler 2007: 179 note that the Danaids' use of religious terminology and *themis* in particular would be appropriate in reference to children's duty to care for their parents.
[466] He argues that the oracle is an Aeschylean innovation (107-8). With regard to the intentional obscuring of the Danaids' motives and desire for suspense, Sicherl's view here is very much in keeping with my own. Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon* is a particularly good example of a character in Aeschylus who conceals her internal plans for the sake of the suspense.

themselves a perfectly acceptable union.[467] Lastly, their willingness to risk the welfare of Argos for the sake of one's man's life might have been considered highly problematic.

Rösler takes Sicherl's argument one step further, asserting that the oracle is so fundamental to the *Suppliants* that the play cannot be understood without it.[468] For this reason, he argues, it must have been the second play of the trilogy and have been preceded by the *Egyptians*, which would take place in Egypt, introduce the oracle, and treat the quarrel between Danaus and Aegyptus (2007: 182; cf. Sommerstein 1996: 166-8, 1997: 76 n.74). Despite a general consensus that the *Suppliants* is the first play of the trilogy, there is no external evidence to prove that it cannot be the second,[469] but Rösler's suggestion leaves some important questions unanswered: if the audience already knows that the Danaids are motivated by the oracle, why is there no mention of it in the *Suppliants*?[470] Rösler's recognition of this problem explains his aforementioned

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[467] Sicherl 1986: 105 suggests that Aeschylus forces the Danaids to choose between the "duty to honor one's parents…and the law of marriage." Rösler 2007: 179 implies that the knowledge that the Danaids were attempting to save their father will have a much more positive effect, observing that with the knowledge of the oracle, "the seemingly extravagant threat by the Danaids to hang themselves from the staturs of the gods (457-67) now appears in a different light—as the ultimate consequence of the duaghters' duty to their father.

[468] Cf. Rösler 2007: 180: "If one does not possess this knowledge, then the effect is not of a build-up of tension but of misunderstanding and confusion." In this way Rösler seems to underestimate the effect of misdirection. I would suggest that the misunderstanding and confusion which he imagines the audience will experience is intended to heighten the revelation of their real motive—whatever it may be. See *Persians* 739-40 for an example of an oracle that is only mentioned three quarters of the way through the play and is not fully explained even then. Broadhead 1960: lv notes that "[i]t has been suggested that the oracles referred to by Darius (*Pers*. 739-40, 801) were revealed by Phineus to the Argonauts [in *Phineus*, the play that preceded the *Persians* in its trilogy] whose expedition was regarded by Persians as an invasion of Asia by Europe, to be repaid in course of time by the invasion of Europe by Asia under the Perisans: some such allusion in the earlier play is said to be necessary to explain why in the *Persae* the oracles are assumed to be well known."

[469] See Garvie 1969: 185-6 and Rösler 2007: 181-2 for a discussion of the *Suppliants* as the second play of the trilogy. P. Oxy. 2256.3 is no help in this regard. Snell 1953: 438-9 added *Suppliants* and *Aigyptioi* be added (in that order) before *Danaides* in the fragmentary didascalia, thereby supplying the names of the three plays in Aeschylus' trilogy, but either order is possible. See Garvie 1969: 2-3 for a discussion of the papyrus.

[470] There is good reason not to mention the oracle to the Argives, but not when they are by themselves or with Danaus.

emphasis on suppliants' "divine right to asylum," regardless of their circumstances and motives (2007: 183-4). But then why in the first song, when only the gods, and possibly Danaus, are listening, do the Danaids not only fail to mention the oracle, but also offer contradictory explanations for their flight?[471] Sommerstein attempts to salvage Rösler's proposal by accounting for this problem. He suggests that the Danaids do not mention the oracle because they are unaware of it. Danaus is attempting to save himself without their knowledge, "using the myth of Io…to train the girls *away* from their socially "proper" role" (Sommerstein 1996: 167-8).[472] This interpretation has the advantage of explaining the function of Io's myth in the text and accounting for the absence of any mention of the oracle in this play. One might object, however, on the grounds that it would be difficult to convey on stage the process of indoctrination-through-myth that the Danaids are supposed to have undergone. It is also difficult to think of a plan of this devilish complexity elsewhere in Greek drama.[473] Yet if spectators adopted Sommerstein's position, they would be likely to view the Aegyptids as victims after a fashion, and the Danaids as victims twice over, once at the hands of their father, and, as a direct result of his actions, again at the hands of the Aegyptids. All blame for their socially unacceptable views of marriage as well as their inappropriate behavior later in the play would be placed squarely on Danaus, who endangers his family and his would-be patrons in a desperate attempt to save himself.

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[471] Rösler 2007: 183-4 suggests that they are already preparing for Danaus in the first song. He also suggests that discussion of their motives is intentionally withheld until the final play in the trilogy in which it will be treated with the help of the gods. Neither of these explanations are particularly convincing. Accusations of *hybris*, though seemingly unrelated to the oracle, might accurately describe the Aegyptids' behavior in the wake of the Danaids' flight.

[472] Cf. Turner 2001: 28 n.9. See also Alaux 2001: 12.

[473] One might compare in Aeschylean drama Orestes' plan in the *Cho.* to kill his mother, but this seems to be of an altogether different order.

I.4 THE MYTH OF THE DANAIDS

Allusions to the murder of the Aegyptids abound in the first song of the *Suppliants*, These references are often striking in their own right and, on occasion, invite those familiar with the myth to step back and compare the girls on stage to the husband-murderers of myth. They would undoubtedly influence spectators' opinion of the Danaids regardless of what their present motives and circumstances appear to be. In the absence of any other information about their flight, the Danaids' claim that they have not been exiled because they committed murder (6-7) might have appeared excessively specific and would have reminded most spectators of the murder for which the Danaids are known (Murray 1958: 79, Gantz 1978: 280).[474] At line 21, the Danaids announce that they have come to Argos σὺν τοῖσδ' ἱκετῶν ἐγχειριδίος. Although it is usually taken a branch here, an ἐγχειριδίος is a dagger, and one might be led to believe that the Danaids come "with these daggers belonging to suppliants" (Murray 1958: 78, Gantz 1978: 280, Sandin 2001: 48-9). The image is immediately dispelled in the next line,[475] but this odd statement might have might have left some spectators considering the irony that the Danaids are now begging for protection from men whom, in all likelihood, they will soon kill (cf. Conacher 1996: 81).

The most conspicuous allusion to the murder of the Aegyptids comes when the Danaids compare their lamentation to that of the wife of Tereus, who murdered her own

[474]Garvie 1969: 165, 179 n.5 discusses a version of the myth that place the murder of the Aegyptids in Egypt (Σ *Il.* A 42, Δαναίδες?). If it predates the *Suppliants*, the Danaids' claim situates the Aeschylus' account in the context of other accounts and alerts them to present situation: the Danaids have fled Egypt but have yet to murder their suitors, if in fact they ever will.

[475] The Danaids refer to their suppliant branches, in which case e)xeiridi/oij would be taken as an adjective meaning "in the hand"

son and was transformed into a nightengale (58-68), known most commonly as Procne (see Murray 1958: 79, Gantz 1978: 80, and Conacher 1996: 83). She punished her husband for raping and mutilating her sister by killing their son, cooking him, and feeding their son to him (*FGH* 26 F 1.31 (Konon); Ov. *Met*. 6.424-674; Apoll. 3.14.8). The Danaids' point is clear enough: their wailing sounds like Procne's, and no one has suffered more than her. As for its effect upon the audience, it is probably never a good idea to compare oneself to a woman who has murdered her own child, and the parallels between the story of Procne and that of the mythical Danaids is obvious. Like Procne, the Danaids will punish an act of sexually motivated violence with an act of violence against their own family.[476] As with all of the allusions to the murder of the Aegyptids in the first song, however, the comparison to Procne looks forward to the murder, but gives little indication of how it should be judged. Tereus and Procne's story is finally ambiguous. Tereus' crimes are unspeakable, and he deserves to be punished for them. At the same time, although one can sympathize with Procne's position, most would consider her revenge excessive.[477]

Allusions to the murder of the Aegyptids may also have heightened the audience's sensitivity to intimations of violence in the Danaid's behavior. The Danaids' prayer that the Aegyptids be drowned at sea in a storm (29-39) and their observation of Zeus's power to cast mortals down effortlessly and destroy them (96-99) might be seen not as a last ditch effort to evade the Aegyptids, but as an indication of the Danaids' deep-seated

[476] If this connection is not clear enough, they are also both forced to flee from their homelands (63).
[477] The possible reference to Procne's μήτις at line 61 may also be seen as a parallel to the way in which the Danaids carry out the murder of the Aegyptids.

desire to see them dead.[478] Even the Danaids' threats to kill themselves can be taken as evidence of their capacity for violence (cf. Belfiore 2000: 42, 57).[479]

In the preceding sections, I have tried to show what anyone who has looked at the scholarship on the play already knows. The first song of the *Suppliants* not only supports multiple explanations of the Danaids' nature and circumstances but also invites them. It elicits pity for the Danaids and enmity toward the Aegyptids, inviting spectators to invest themselves emotionally in the welfare of the Danaids. At the same time, the Danaids' failure to reveal their motives and circumstances creates a deeper interest in them. The result may be a kind of reserved allegiance to the Danaids on the part of the audience. The Danaids' aversion to the Aegyptids may be grounded in a problematic aversion to all marriage. Frequent references to Io suggest an as yet unclear motive for their actions. Allusions to their family connection to the Aegyptids only complicate matters, offering a basis for the Aegyptids' claim as it underlines their abuses. The possibility of an oracle foretelling Danaus' death raises the possibility that the Danaids are misrepresenting themselves for good reason. Finally, allusions to the murder of the Aegyptids, which the Danaids could commit in self-defense, in cold blood, or out of blind allegience, emphasize the importance of judging the Danaids correctly, but do little to help spectators in the process. In the Danaids' first song, and throughout much of the *Suppliants*, there is no right answer to the problem of the Danaids, only a number of equally tenable possibilities that will only be resolved in a subsequent play of the trilogy.

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[478] Note, however, that the Chorus of the *Septem* makes similar prayers without any intention of carrying them out personally (Sept. 312-17).

[479] Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 37 suggests that the threat(s) of suicide "offer an inverted presage of their future crime."

II Danaus and his Daughters

The interaction between Danaus and his daughters outwardly corroborates many of the Danaids' claims. Danaus' presence establishes that, despite their prominence, he is not simply a puppet of his daughters. He also independently confirms that the Danaids' fugitive status has nothing to do with murder (196),[480] that they are in danger,[481] and that the Aegyptids' behavior is objectionable. Danaus and his daughters demonstrate a reassuring piety in keeping with that of the first song. And yet, Danaus' contribution does nothing to clarify the Danaids' circumstances. Though more involved than the Danaids' accusations, Danaus' criticism of the Aegyptids does not pin down the Aegyptids' crimes against the Danaids. Furthermore, his advice to his daughters, in which he details how they should elicit sympathy from the approaching Argives points to the artificial nature of such appeals and offers the first textual cue that the playwright has intentionally manipulated spectators' response to the Danaids.

II.1 Danaus: Leader of the Pack

Danaus' behavior throughout this short scene is consistent with the Danaids' earlier claim that he is their leader (11-2). His absence (or silence)[482] during the first song and his more conspicuous absences in later scenes have led some critics to conclude that the Danaids act independently of Danaus, who is simply their vassal.[483] Yet this

[480] Conacher 1996: 86 suggests that this confirmation may not be reassuring to the audience and merely "repeats the anticipatory irony which we have already noted of the Chorus's claims at vv 6-7 of the Prologue."
[481] At this point Danaus appears to be more afraid of the approaching Argives than of the Aegyptids (cf. 186-7, 203, and his advice to take up positions as suppliants at 188ff.).
[482] See Taplin 1977: 193-4 and Sandin 2003: 37-8 for a discussion of Danaus' role during this song.
[483] See, e.g., Wilamowitz 1914: 13 and Kitto 1961: 15, though Kitto ventures that "Danaus, beyond a doubt, had an independent role in the second and third plays of the trilogy." See also Lesky 1983: 67. His

scene appears to establish Danaus' indisputable authority over his daughters. He identifies himself as their captain (ναυκλήρωι) and implies his fitness to lead on the basis of his intelligence, trustworthiness, age, and the fact that he is their father (176-7). The string of admonitions, orders and advice that follows and the deference the Danaids pay him only reinforce the impression that he is firmly in control. This is a point of some importance. Athenian spectators might perceive a problem if a father is seen allowing his daughters to do whatever they please (Wilamowitz 1914: 13). This is not the case here (cf. Lloyd-Jones 1983: 49, 52, Zeitlin 1992: 218-9, and Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 35). At the very least, Danaus supports the Danaids in their opposition to the Aegyptids. His authoritative stance leaves open the possibility that, in spite of his relatively small part in the *Suppliants*, he is the prime mover of the Danaids' flight from Egypt, whether he is motivated by a dynastic struggle or by an oracle. Although his motives remain unclear, spectators may have interpreted his comment that not even in death will a man who behaves like the Aegyptids escape punishment (228-29) as evidence of his intentions. Given the degree to which Danaus exerts his authority over the Danaids in this scene, his frequent absences throughout the rest of the play may be taken as an indication not of the Danaids' independence but of Danaus' ability to control his daughters from behind the scenes.[484]

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reduced role during the first song might not seem so strange to an Athenian audience. Group prayer is often the preserve of women in Aeschylus (Cf. *Septem*, *Eumenides*, and *Choephori* though Orestes joins the women; One might also compare the similar situation in *Iliad* 6). Danaus might therefore be expected to stand aside while his daughters addressed the gods in song. If he were absent, he would not, in any event, have been very far away. Lloyd-Jones 1983: 52 points out that Danaus' silence does not in and of itself show his subservience. Taplin 1977: 194 suggests that his silence may have been intended to indicate that the Danaids will be the primary figures of the play.

[484] Hall 1989: 123 argues that "the length and detail of Danaus' prescription" would alert the audience to "his calculated 'stage management' of the scene" and show that he is in control throughout. See also

II.2 Eliciting Sympathy

At the approach of the Argives, Danaus tells his daughters to take up a position at the altar of the gods with their suppliant wands in hand. He then proceeds to detail how they should address the Argives, what they should say, and how to behave while saying it. Because the Danaids are collectively a "needy foreign fugitive" (χρεῖος ξένη φυγάς) and in a position of weakness (203), they must answer their hosts with "respectful, mournful, and needy words" (αἰδοῖα καὶ γοεδνὰ καὶ ζαχρεῖ' ἔπη, 194). They must speak precisely about their "bloodless flight" (τορῶς λέγουσαι τάσδ' ἀναιμάκτους φυγάς, 196). They should not be overbold nor speak anything in vain (197-9, 203). Their speech should not be too forward (πρόλεσχος) nor halting (ἐφολκὸς) (200-1). They should consistently yield to the locals because they are easily offended (ἐπίφθονον γένος) (201-2). In short, Danaus tells his daughters to do everything in their power in order to elicit the sympathy of the Argives, to appear to be the desperate and pitiful victims they claim to be. This is practical advice, and few spectators with any experience in the Athenian lawcourts would be naïve about the importance of making the right impression on one's audience regardless of the justice of one's case. For this reason, many in the audience will have thought nothing more of Danaus' words. At the same time, in a play that depends for its effect on the spectators' emotional response to its protagonists, Danaus has given spectators a "behind the scenes" look into the process of eliciting sympathy from an audience.

Turner (2001), 45, who cites Hall. Cf. Zeitlin 1992: 219. The Danaids' independence may again rear its head when they fail to follow every piece of his advice in their encounter with Pelasgus. See below.

Danaus' advice is a reminder of the potentially artificial nature of appeals for sympathy. This dramaturgical insight may draw spectators' attention toward attempts to manipulate their own sympathies. It does not take long for the Danaids to resume their efforts in this regard. Soon after Danaus gives his advice, the Danaids suggest that they deserve sympathy: they ask Zeus to pity them (οἴκτιρε) and pray that Apollo, as a fellow exile, will sympathize and stand beside them (συγγνοῖτο δῆτα καὶ παρασταίη πρόφρων (216), "let [Apollo] sympathize and earnestly stand beside us," cf. 215). More striking, however, is the way in which Danaus' advice recalls the Danaids' attempt to gain the favor of the gods and the sympathy of the audience in the first song. There, the Danaids drew attention to their suppliant wands (20-1), their words were, for the most part, "respectful, mournful, and needy," and they announced that they were not exiled because of bloodshed (6). In short, the Danaids already appear to have implemented Danaus' advice, and the similarities between Danaus' advice and the Danaids' actions, particularly the references to "bloodless flight," may have alerted the audience to the potentiall artificial nature of the Danaids' initial appeal.[485] The resemblance between the Danaids' actions and their father's advice does not, however, prove that the Danaids' song was insincere; it merely raises that possibility. Spectators may have suspected the Danaids of dissembling during the first song based solely on the discrepancy between the Danaids' behavior on stage and the behavior attributed to them by the mythical tradition.

[485] The air of secrecy surrounding Danaus and his daughters' communication may have fostered this impression. Danaus' comments upon the need for forethought (προμηθίαν, 178) and his later reference to a "device" or "plot" (μηχανῆς, 209) may point to the existence of an unspoken plan. Danaus' admonition to his daughters to guard his words as if writing them down on papyrus (αἰνῶ φυλάξαι τἄμ᾽ ἔπη δελτουμένας, 179) may simply be a cliché that amounts to little more than "remember" (see Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 145, Sansone 1975, 61, cf. φυλάξομαι…μεμνῆσθαι with its similar construction at line 205), but Danaus' contrast between the openness of an oral pronouncement with the secrecy of writing later in the play (946-9) suggests that there may be more to his choice of words.

Yet, in its resemblance to the first song, Danaus' advice offers the play's first overt indication that the Danaids' sympathetic account of their situation and attempts to invite antipathy for the Aegyptids may be less than sincere or truthful.

II.3 The Aegyptids according to Danaus

Danaus' criticism of the Aegyptids at the end of the scene manages to be at the same time more detailed and more damning than that of his daughters', while maintaining a similar opacity regarding the specific nature of their crimes. Danaus conveys his thoughts on the Aegyptids through an elaborate analogy, telling his daughters:

> ἐν ἁγνῶι δ' ἑσμὸς ὡς πελειάδων
> ἵζεσθε κίρκων τῶν ὁμοπτέρων φόβῳ
> ἐχθρῶν ὅμαίμοις καὶ μιαινόντων γένος.
> ὄρνιθος ὄρνις πῶς ἄν ἁγνεύοι φαγών,
> πῶς δ'ἄν γαμῶν ἄκουσαν ἄκοντος πάρα
> ἁγνὸς γένοιτ' ἄν
>
> (223-8)
>
> Sit in this holy spot, like a flock of doves
> in fear of hawks with the same wings,
> hostile to their family and polluting their own kind;
> how could a bird eat another bird and be pure?
> how could one take an unwilling bride from an unwilling father
> and be pure?

One can immediately appreciate the seriousness of the Aegyptids' crimes by the fact that Danaus compares their actions to such taboo behavior as internecine quarrel, religious pollution, cannibalism, and the violation of a father's rights over his children; according to Danaus, these crimes warrant punishment in Hades (228-31). Despite their severity, however, Danaus' accusations appear intentionally to leave in play many of the

interpretations intimated in the Danaids' song.[486] Much of the passage merely reinforces what is already known about the Danaids. The image of hawks chasing doves suggests the victimization of the weak by the strong and echoes the Danaids' characterization of their situation;[487] references to family relations (ὁμοπτέρων, ἐχθρῶν ὅμαίμοις, μιαινόντων γένος, ὄρνιθος ὄρνις…) remind the audience that the Danaids' persecutors are also their cousins; Danaus affirms that the Aegyptids are pursuing the marriage against his and his daughters' wishes. There is no unequivocal statement of motive, and one may conclude that Danaus is complaining about the Aegyptids' behavior rather than its underlying causes. Attempts to uncover a motive depend on choosing which elements of the account to emphasize. If disregarding Danaus' rights and forcing marriage upon the Danaids through violence is understood to be the Aegyptids' real crime and the source of their religious impurity (227-8; 224; cf. 221, in which the Danaids pray for the good of the ἐλεύθεροι (221), the "free"),[488] references to family would remind spectators that the Aegyptids are victimizing their own kin and would make their crime that much worse (MacKinnon 1978: 80, Fisher 1992: 266). The comparison of the Aegyptids' actions to cannibalism (226-8) would illustrate the violent nature of the Aegyptids' intentions or suggest that the religious impurity incurred by the Aegyptids is comparable to that incurred by acts of cannibalism (Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 180, Fisher 1992: 266).

[486] The Aegyptids are not even named—only the content of Danaus' reproaches suggests that they are the subject. Furthermore, the analogical form prevents a strict one-to-one correspondence between accusation and action. Cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 180.
[487] Cf. κιρκηλάτου ἀηδόνος in reference to Procne at line 62 and note its ambiguous use there.
[488] So, Ireland 1974: 27, MacKinnon 1978: 80, and Fisher 1992: 266. This is the most conservative interpretation of the passage and is in keeping with the Danaids' obvious unwillingness to marry the Aegyptids and their accusations of *hybris*. It is also possible to reconcile it with the oracle hypothesis.

The frequent references to violence against the family may, however, lead spectators to consider Danaus' words an oblique indication that he and his daughters reject the Aegyptids on the basis of their family connection. The language of religious pollution and violence against the family is in keeping with a charge of incest, although difficulties remain regarding an Athenian audience's ability to perceive the criminal nature of such a union (Lévy 1985: 33; cf. Ireland 1974: 27, Lesky 1983: 68, Fisher 1992: 266). Lévy observes that the idea of cannibalism suggests that the Aegyptids are attempting to subsume Danaus' line into their own (1985: 33-4). This image lends itself to underlying fears of incest as well as interfamilial power struggles (cf. MacKinnon 1978: 81). If the latter, the Aegyptids' rejection of Danaus' rights might still be considered a symptom of Aegyptus' and the Aegyptids' mistreatment of Danaus and his daughters rather than its primary cause.[489]

III Meeting of Argives: Pelasgus and the Danaids

As promised, the Danaids recount to Pelasgus the story of Io in order to show that, contrary to their appearance, they are in fact of Argive descent and therefore deserving of Argos' hospitality. Having proven their connection to Argos, the Danaids resist Pelasgus' attempts to learn why they fled Egypt and why they now seek protection. They insist instead upon the demands placed upon Pelasgus by the institution of supplication. After unsuccessfully urging Pelasgus to bypass his people and come to a decision regarding their situation, the Danaids threaten to kill themselves and pollute the city, thereby forcing Pelasgus to decide in their favor and assist them in convincing the

[489] A dynastic struggle leaves open the possibility that the Aegyptids have gained power over the Danaids that supercedes Danaus' rights as their father.

Argives to do the same. This encounter at least partially aligns spectators with a new perspective and provides the first explicit counter-narrative to that of the Danaids, as Pelasgus gives voice to spectators' doubts, challenges the validity of their case, and reveals the consequences of a successful supplication on the part of the Danaids. As a result, spectators' allegiance may have shifted somewhat away from the Danaids.

III.1 Io and the Danaids: Barbaric Argives

In addition to establishing their heritage (cf. 325-6), the Danaids' account of the myth of Io, conveyed through dialogue with Pelasgus,[490] provides spectators with a narrative backdrop for their references to Io as well as material for speculation regarding the Danaids' motives. According to the Danaids, who themselves appear to rely on common knowledge (cf. 291: φασὶ; 301: φασίν), Hera discovered that Zeus and Io were having sex (295, 296). She punished Io, turning her into a cow, but Zeus transformed himself into a bull and continued to pursue her (301; 300). Hera then appointed a guard for Io, but Hermes killed him (305).[491] Hera finally sent a gadfly to drive Io away, but Zeus followed her to Egypt (306-9), where they produce Epaphos, the father of the Danaids' line.

The fact that the Danaids present the myth of Io where a mere reminder might have sufficed for their purposes ("Pelasgus, do you know of Io?") signals once more the importance of Io to the play as a whole. Yet, viewed with an eye toward using the myth to explain the actions of the Danaids, this narrative offers a mixed message. Hera plays a

[490] Pelasgus' familiarity with the story gives the impression that the Io myth is common knowledge, and may play on the audience's knowledge of her story and that of her descendants.
[491] In most accounts it is made clear that Hermes acts at Zeus's bidding.

prominent and negative role in the account, but not without reason. The Danaids emphasize Io's slights against the goddess and the institution of marriage: the sexual relationship of which Hera becomes aware is stated in somewhat lurid terms,[492] and her betrayal of the goddess continues despite Hera's best efforts. Io's betrayal is that much worse because of her former connection to Hera: she was not simply another one of Zeus's love interests but one of Hera's own priestesses (291-2). This focus on the antipathy between Io and Hera is in keeping with the idea that the Danaids' opposition to marriage stems from, and is to some degree defined by, their ancestor's opposition to the goddess of marriage. If so, the fact that she is unable to foil Zeus and Io's relationship may bode well for the Danaids in their own struggle against the goddess.[493] And yet, the relationship between Hera and the Danaids' marriage has become less straightforward. Whereas before, the pursuit of Hera's gadfly was made to resemble that of the Aegyptids, now Zeus appears to be the tenacious suitor, overcoming every obstacle to be with the object of his affection (Murray 1958: 58).[494] Whether, under this reading, Zeus's success

[492] Though a conventional term, μειχθῆναι (295) makes the nature of the relationship very clear. τἀμπαλάγματα (296), "entanglements," gives the listener a picture of what exactly it was that Hera discovered. τἀμπαλάγματα is "the vulgate restoration" for the manuscript reading παλλαγμάτων, which Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 237 describes as "an unmetrical vox nihili." Sandin 2003: 170-1 offers the "vulgar" παλαίσματα, "wrestlings" proposed by Butler and supported by West, but notes that "the sense of the stem παλλακ- [in παλλαγμάτων], 'concubinage', fits the context." All of these readings offers an unsavory account of the encounter, either offering graphic representation of the act or contrasting Hera's roleas legitimate partner and Io's as illegitimate.

[493] At this stage, the clear opposition between the Danaids' ancestor and Hera may have created suspense regarding the Danaids' appeal to Argos. The account repeatedly observes Hera's connection to Argos. She is the Ἀργεία θεός (299), the "Argive goddess," and her temple is in Argos (291-2). This may be thought to weigh against them with the Argive populace.

[494] Unlike Murray, I see no indication of violence on the part of Zeus in this account. He argues of ῥυσίων at 315 that "[t]he seizure of Io by Zeus takes on an implication of violence, and the image, previously simple, has now acquired fresh and suggestive overtones" (35). But see Belfiore 2000: 48, who notes a negative usage of the term at 728 but stresses its overall positive connotations elsewhere, "particularly in connection with supplication."

points to the success of the Aegyptids or to a different, happier union for the Danaids is for the moment unclear.

Having established Io's identity, the Danaids prove their connection to Argos with a list of the descendants of Zeus and Io that begins with Epaphos and culminates with Danaus and Aegyptus, the respective fathers of the Danaids and the Aegyptids. The Danaid family tree fulfils its stated purpose but may have affected the audience in other ways as well. The list of ancestors helps the Danaids work their way from the mythical past, with its imperfectly understood relationship to the present, to the recent history of Aegyptus, Danaus and their fifty sons and fifty daughters. Although there is no mention here or elsewhere in the play of a quarrel between Danaus and his brother, something must have led to Danaus' flight, and the reference to Aegyptus at line 323, the first of the play, in the vicinity of Danaus may have raised questions about the terms on which they left one another.[495] Pelasgus, for one, is prompted to ask about the Danaids' motives for fleeing (326-7), and spectators' speculation likewise may have turned to matters at hand. The enumeration of the Danaids' family line also draws attention back to their family connection to the Aegyptids. The Danaids simply state the nature of the relationship here, so its effect upon the audience's opinion of the Aegyptids will depend on earlier impressions. On the other hand, by demonstrating that the Aegyptids share the same relationship to Zeus and Io as the Danaids, the text may come one step closer to undercutting the clear distinction that the Danaids draw between themselves and the Aegyptids as well as the Danaids' claims upon their ancestors for aid in the opening song.

[495] The names of Aegyptus and Danaus are not simply stated but revealed over the course of three lines: the Danaids mention their father at 319 and give his name at line 321; they refer to Danaus' brother at 321 and name him in 323. This buildup that may have created anticipation and given the impression that these are important figures in the play.

III.2 THE DANAID'S FOREIGN APPEARANCE

This scene is prefaced on the Danaids' foreign appearance. It is the reason for Pelasgus' disbelief, and he repeatedly remarks upon what would already have been obvious to spectators from the Danaids' costumes and masks: they wear luxurious, barbarian clothing (235-6) and look like foreign women (279-89). It is difficult to say what effect the Danaids' appearance might have had on an Athenian audience, especially shortly after the Persian invasion. The text here offers little guidance in this regard. Pelasgus likens the Danaids' appearance to that of various inhabitants of the Persian Empire, including Libyans, Egyptians, Cypriots,[496] Indians, and Ethiopians (279-89; cf. Hdt. 3.90-94, 7.70.1), but Persian women would likely appear more exotic than threatening to a Greek audience. The Danaids' foreign appearance may take on greater significance later in the play when barbarian stereotypes are used against the Aegyptids, but at this stage, their appearance may have functioned as little more than pretext for Io's story. More telling, however, may be Pelasgus' comparison of the Danaids to τὰς ἀνάνδρους κρεοβότους τ' Ἀμαζόνας (287), the "manless, flesh-eating Amazons." Although, like the others before it, this comparison may conjure up exotic images,[497] it has been viewed as confirmation that the Danaids' aversion runs to all men, and may at

[496] Though the exact meaning of lines 280-1 is unclear due to corruption (see Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 223-6), the image of a Cyprian stamp struck in the form of a women by male authors (Κύπριος χαρακτήρ…ἐν γυναικείοις τύποις…πέπληκται τεκτόνων πρὸς ἀρσένων), with its reference to Aphrodite (or at least her island) and deployment of gendered language (see below), seem like they should be of great significance to the play as a whole. Cf. Zeitlin 1992: 226, who says that the image from art denotes the sexual objectification of women while the image of striking the stamp taken with the reference to Aphrodite suggests sex.

[497] The tendency of vase-painters to depict Amazons in Barbarian dress may suggest another point of comparison between Amazons and the other people in Pelasgus' list. See Devambe and Kauffmann-Samaras 1981: 637.

least have strengthened the possibility in the minds of some spectators (Gantz 1978: 281, Turner 2001: 32 n.18.).[498]

III.3 The story of Apis: a Model for Events to Come?

While introducing himself to the Danaids, Pelasgus tells the story of Apis, who was honored by Argos after he used cuts (ἄκη τομαῖα)[499] to purge the land of the man-eating (βροτοφθόρων)[500] beasts it produced when polluted by ancient blood (παλαιῶν αἱμάτων μιάσμασιν χρανθεῖς) (260-70). This interlude is relatively unmotivated (cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 210); it is prompted only by the fact the land is named for Apis (260-1). For this reason, spectators may have considered its bearing on the story and, particularly, how it relates to the Danaids. Apis's story may be counted for or against them. Spectators may have noted parallels between the story of Apis and of the Danaids that point to a positive conclusion for their travails. Like Apis, the Danaids have come to Argos and will, according to the myth, use cuts to purge the land of a hostile (δυσμενῆ) group (cf. Gantz 1978: 281, Johansen-Whittle II 1980, Conacher 1996: 88). Others may have observed that the beasts in need of purging resemble not the Aegyptids so much as the Danaids, who will prove to be hostile housemates (δυσμενῆ ξυνοικίαν, 267), and whose murder of their husband-cousins will no doubt result in blood pollution such as

[498] See, however, Murray 1958: 7 and von Fritz 1962: 162. One might also note that Persian soldiers were also depicted as Amazons.
[499] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 215 and Tucker 1889: 64, among others, suggest that τομαῖα here refers to the cutting of herbs. See also Gantz 1978: 281 n.12.
[500] Literally, "mortal-eating." They do not specifically prey upon men.

that described by Pelasgus (265-6).[501] In this way, the play once again uses misdirection to heighten suspense with regard to the nature of the Danaids.

III.4 Putting the Danaids to the Test

After accepting their claim to Argive heritage, Pelasgus asks the Danaids about the circumstances and motives that led them to flee Egypt and supplicate themselves in Argos.[502] And yet, despite the fact that the Danaids' responses address issues fundamental to understanding their position and which have thus been the crux of many an interpretation of the play, a combination of textual problems, including corruption and the uncertain attribution of lines, and evasiveness on the part of the Danaids prevents these lines from shedding significant light on their situation (Griffith 1986: 334, Sandin 2003: 180). What can be said with some certainty is that Pelasgus gives voice to the questions that were doubtless on the mind of many spectators and that the Danaids studiously avoid addressing the details of their past in their responses.

The Danaids sidestep Pelasgus' first attempt to glean information. When he asks how and why they left Egypt (326-7), they all but acknowledge that a flight such as theirs is unique and therefore likely to raise questions: it is entirely unexpected (τίς ηὖχει τήνδ' ἀνέλπιστον φυγὴν, 330) and embodies the variable nature of human evils (328-9; cf. ἐπεὶ, 330). They do not, however, reward Pelasgus or the audience's curiosity with

[501] Cf. Murray 1958 81 and Turner 2001: 39, who suggest that Hypermestra and Lynceus will play the part of Apis in a later play. Bakewell 1997: 216-8 argues that the part will be played by Pelasgus. See also Zeitlin 1992: 208.

[502] Pelasgus does not simply accept their plea, despite their having properly carried out the ritual. See Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 261. Although the Danaids evade these questions, they do not reject them as improper. We can therefore suppose that their supplication is validly open to evaluation.

answers. They reveal only that they are fleeing the marriage bed (εὐναίων γάμων)[503] and say nothing about the marriage or their circumstances that might explain the pronouncement.[504] Although Pelasgus does not comment on it immediately,[505] the broad formulation of the Danaids' aversion to marriage have disturbing implications for audience members, who could take this as evidence for the Danaids' aversion to all forms of marriage and, perhaps, more specifically, sex.[506]

Pelasgus tries again, this time asking why the Danaids are supplicating themselves at the altars of the gods (333-4). There is little agreement about the text of the dialogue that follows, let alone its meaning. The apparent lack of continuity between questions and answers may be the result of lacunae, or they may reflect a deliberate strategy of evasion on the part of the Danaids (Ireland 1974: 20).[507] Though consensus regarding it does not seem possible, a conservative treatment of the dialogue as we have it and its possible implications will be attempted here. These are the lines as Page prints them with a provisional translation:[508]

〈ΧΟ.〉 ὡς μὴ γένωμαι δμωὶς Αἰγύπτου γένει.
ΠΕ. πότερα κατ᾽ ἔχθραν, ἦ τὸ μὴ θέμις λέγεις;

[503] The text is uncertain at this point. The manuscript reads ἐχει μετὰ πτοίουσαν εὐναίων γάμων. It is now standard to read Turnebus' ἔχθει for ἐχει. Many different emendations have been offered for μετὰ πτοίουσαν. Page prints ἔχθει μεταπτοοῦσαν, "fleeing because of hatred (of the marriage bed)." It is perhaps enough to say that the Danaids are fleeing marriage.
[504] Von Fritz 1962: 161 notes that this statement only expresses the Danaids' "personal aversion."
[505] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 269 suggest that, being wholly ignorant of the Danaids' situation, Pelasgus "cannot understand the full purport of 330-2 with its allusion to marriage…."
[506] Ireland 1974: 18 admits as much but attempts to justify the seemingly general statement as "an inducement for Pelasgus to enter upon a period of rapid dialogue."
[507] Note the similar strategy in their response to Pelasgus' first attempt to question them. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 272 posit a two-line Lacuna after line 337. See also Wilamowitz 1914: 14 and Sandin 2003: 180-1, who offers possible reconstructions. I am a little wary of these attempts.
[508] I have followed West 1990 in marking the uncertain attribution of the lines and calling the king Pelasgus.

〈ΧΟ.〉 τίς δ᾽ ἄν φίλους[509] ὄνοιτο τοὺς κεκτημένους;
ΠΕ. σθένος μὲν οὕτως μεῖζον αὔξεται βροτοῖς.
〈ΧΟ.〉 καὶ δυσυχούντων γ᾽ εὐμαρὴς ἀπαλλαγή.
(335-39)
<CH.> so that I do not become a slave to the Aegyptids.
PE. Because of enmity, or do you mean it is not Right?
<CH.> who would fault masters who are dear?
<PE. > This is how strength is increased for mortals.
<CH.> and, when things go badly, escape is easy.

337 ὄνοιτο Robortello: ὤνοιτο M and Sch.: ωνοῖτο Turnebus οἴοντο Portus

Line 335 is the closest the Danaids come to stating their motives and, by implication, those of the Aegyptids: they supplicate themselves so as not to become slaves (δμωὶς) to the Aegyptids. And yet spectators can interpret this statement in a number of ways.[510] A δμωὶς is properly a female slave won in war. Taken literally, then, the Danaids would be asking Pelasgus to war (successfully) against the Aegyptids, thereby preventing them from being taken as booty, and this is in keeping with Pelasgus' conclusion that protecting them will bring about war (342). It is also possible that the Danaids have already been won in battle by the Aegyptids and are therefore asking Pelasgus to prevent the Aegyptids from rightfully, if somewhat problematically, given the family connection, reclaiming their δμωίδες. The Danaids may, however, be using δμωὶς metaphorically to describe a marriage of master and slave more than husband and wife.[511] If this is the case, the audience's reponse to the statement will depend in large part on their opinion of the Danaids. Do the Aegyptids intend an uncivilized union in which they will enslave the

[509] One can also read φιλοῦ᾽ (φιλοῦσα) for φίλους with Marckscheffel, though the reading does not substantially alter the meaning of φίλους —the contingent sense of the participle can be understood from the context with φίλους. See Seaford 1987: 117.
[510] Pelasgus' desire for clarification of the Danaids' statement (338) is an indication of its polysemous nature.
[511] Lévy 1985: 39 points out that Aristotle considered the master-slave relationship characteristic of barbarian marriage. See also Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 269

Danaids to their desires, as the Danaids and their father have repeatedly suggested (cf. Ireland 1974: 335)? Or is it the Danaids who harbor an inappropriate view of marriage whereby all wives and female sexual partners are no better than δμωίδες, as their immediately preceding statement of motive and their prayers to Artemis to flee the beds of men remaining unmarried and unconquered imply (cf. Fisher 1992: 267)?[512]

These questions are echoed in the response of Pelasgus, who attempts to distinguish between the literal and figurative uses of δμωὶς. He asks the Danaids whether they fear becoming δμωίδες as a result of warfare brought on by enmity (κατ' ἔχθραν)[513] or if they mean that the union proposed by the Aegyptids is contrary to law or custom (τὸ μὴ θέμις),[514] a category that might include a marriage amounting to slavery as well as incest and the oracle. The Danaids do not respond to Pelasgus directly but answer him with another question, the significance of which has eluded modern critics, though, presumably, it would have been clear, or at least clearer, to a fifth-century Athenian audience. The crux of the problem is the emendation of the manuscripts' ὤνοιτο. The Danaids are either speaking in favor of marriage and rejecting the Aegyptids as enemies ("who would fault (ὄνοιτο) masters who are dear?" i.e., even *masters*—not to mention husbands[515]—who are not hostile would be acceptable) (cf. Ireland 1974: 20),[516] or they

[512] See also Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 270.
[513] Johansen-Whittle II (1980), 271 note of κατ' ἔχθραν that "Pelasgus could be supposed to be thinking in terms of a family feud.
[514] Sommerstein 1977: 72: "Pelasgos…assumes that there must be either some feud between the two families, or some illegality in the proposed marriage." This is not the only possible explanation of this question. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 270 lays out possible interpretations. This line may be taken more broadly to refer to the Danaids' rejection of the Aegyptids (cf. Fisher 1992: 267, Conacher 1996: 89).
[515] κεκτημένους responds to δμωὶς, but can mean both master and husband (cf. E. *IA* 714-5).
[516] This answer amounts to the first option, κατ' ἔχθραν, but is not necessarily inconsistent with the second. Johansen-Whittle II (1980), 272 argues that the Danaids believe their hatred to be the equivalent of τὸ μὴ θέμις in so far as they "assimilate qe/mij and simlar objective standards to their own personal feelings." See also de Bouvrie 1990: 153.

are rejecting all marriage as contrary to what is Right[517] ("who would buy (with a dowry) (ωνοῖτο)[518] owners to be their loved ones?").[519] If the Danaids are speaking in favor of marriage, lines 338 and 339 can be taken as expressions of general support for the institution. Pelasgus observes that marriage is how mortals increase their strength,[520] and the Danaids agree that it makes escape from misfortunes easy.[521] If, however, they reject the idea of marriage at 337, Pelasgus' statement in favor of marriage at 338 would be perceived as a challenge.[522] The Danaids respond either with a rejoinder about marriage, namely that, although conventional marriage makes mortals stronger, it is also makes it easy for husbands to discard their wives (i.e., divorce),[523] or they criticize Pelasgus, suggesting that his pro-marriage position is merely an expedient that will allow him to "escape" from the Danaids (Garvie 1969: 220).[524] Depending on the correct interpretation of line 339, Pelasgus' question at 340 ("So, what can I do for you") either

[517] "Right" specifically as opposed to "legal" or "customary." The Danaids appear to contrast implicitly legality and Justice in their response at lines 395-6 to Pelasgus' insistence upon Egyptian law (387-91).
[518] Sandin 2003: 181-2 prefers οἴοντο, "consider," though it amounts to the same idea.
[519] The view of Thomson 1973: 291 that the Danaids are speaking out against incest here, stating that they reject their cousins because they are relatives (a viable meaning of φίλους) is generally rejected on the basis that φίλους in line 337 is best taken as an answer to κατ' ἔχθραν in the preceding line. See Garvie 1969: 219-20, Macurdy 1944: 79, MacKinnon 1978: 76. The reference to "relatives" may, however, be present in a secondary sense. See Seaford 1987: 117.
[520] Sommerstein 1977: 72 is being too literal when he asserts that οὕτως can only refer to the idea of faulting masters in 337 or marrying in 335. Surely it can refer to the implied affirmation of marriage (if this is indeed what it means) in 337.
[521] Gantz 1978: 282 notes that the Danaids' reference to escape from misfortunes in the context of marriage might have struck the audience as foreshadowing.
[522] μέν,the particle which Pelasgus employs in line 338, can be used in an adversative or progressive sense such that both interpretations are possible here. See MacKinnon 1978: 77.
[523] E.g., Tucker 1889: 79, Thomson 1973: 292; Seaford 1987: 117. For arguments against this view, see Macurdy 1944: 79 and Garvie 1969: 220, who cites the view of Wolff 1957 that the Danaids would in fact be in favor of divorce. Seaford 1987: 117 observes that "it is perfectly consistent for a woman to point to the ease with which she may be abandoned…as one of a number of objections to entering on a marriage…."
[524] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 274, who translate "Yes, and (thus) it is easy to be rid of the unfortunate," interpret it as a statement against patriarchy so that it can apply both both to the power of a husband to dismiss his wife and to that of a ruler such as Pelasgus to dismiss their claim. Sandin 2003: 182 speaks in favor of this view.

builds on a consensus or moves beyond a point of contention. Unless we are hopelessly mistaken about this passage, it is quite possible that spectators learned once and for all whether the Danaids reject all forms of marriage or only the particular marriage proposed by the Aegyptids.[525] The same cannot be said of us, and it is perhaps best, given our uncertainty regarding this passage, not to put too much interpretive weight on it.

Whatever spectators learn of the Danaids' stance on marriage, however, their case remains in doubt. Despite revealing that they are fleeing the marriage bed and fear slavery at the hands of the Aegyptids, the Danaids have failed to provide Pelasgus or the audience with the information regarding the past and their present situation necessary to judge whether their motives and fears are justified. More important, they have yet to offer decisive proof that the Aegyptids are acting contrary to θέμις,[526] as Pelasgus' response to their claims of justice shows. When they attempt to reassure him that Justice (Δίκη) will watch over them as an ally in a war against the Aegyptids, Pelasgus observes that this is only the case if Justice had a share in matters from the beginning (343-4). Rather than respond to Pelasgus' challenge by providing convincing evidence as to why justice is and has in fact been on their side from the start, the Danaids insist instead that he respect the institution of supplication (345). Yet many in the audience are likely to have shared Pelasgus' doubts.[527]

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[525] A clear rejection of the institution suggests that the Danaids harbor an inappropriate view of marriage but leaves open the possibility that their position will be justified by the revelation of Danaus' oracle. A joint statement in favor of marriage with Pelasgus points to interesting possibilities with regard to the marriage of the other 49 Danaids in Argos.

[526] There is even less basis for their claim if they maintain that the Aegyptids act contrary to θέμις merely by proposing marriage.

[527] This is not to say, however, that spectators would necessarily have come to a conclusion against the Danaids. After all, the failure to reveal their past and their views on marriage are merely circumstantial evidence of the justice of their claims.

III.5 Shifting Alignment , Shifting Allegiance?

The Danaids have properly performed the ritual aspects of supplication and have presented their case, more or less. Pelasgus must now decide whether to take the Danaids in or reject them. Over the course of a decision-making process that extends through this scene and the next, the viewpoint of spectators is increasingly "aligned" with that of Pelasgus.[528] Until Pelasgus' arrival, the Danaids and their father have been the undisputed "main characters" of the *Suppliants*. They are the only figures on stage and are therefore the audience's only source of information regarding the events and issues at the heart of the play. All of its developments have been seen through their eyes. And thus Pelasgus initially appears to be little more than an obstacle in the way of ensuring the Danaids' safety from the Aegyptids. As their dialogue progresses, however, the play shifts its attention away from the Danaids and toward Pelasgus' dilemma. Spectators learn that the Danaids have put the Argives, their would-be saviors, in an uncomfortable position. If they accept the Danaids, they risk facing the Aegyptids in battle. If they reject them, they risk rousing the anger of the gods. Spectators not only learn of the dilemma, but become acquainted with Pelasgus' thought process, motives, and his emotional response to his city's prospects, all with a transparency that contrasts strongly with the opacity of the Danaids.[529] Pelasgus becomes a focal character in his own right,

[528] See Smith 1995: 85-92, 142-153 and section II.4 of the Introduction for the concept of alignment.
[529] Smith 1995: 85-92, 142-153 divides alignment into "spatio-temporal attachment," the degree to which the audience follows the movements of a character, and "subjective access," the degree to which the audience is given insight into a character's thoughts and feelings. Although Pelasgus and the Danaids share the stage, spectators are given much greater access to the workings Pelasgus' mind and are thus in a better position to evaluate his response to his surroundings. This state of affairs with regard to Pelasgus do not continue throughout the *Suppliants*. See below. Transparency of this sort is relatively rare in Aeschylus, and is usually limited to one-track minds (cf. Aegisthus) or secondary characters. See however, the presentation of Orestes in the *Choephori*. Lesky 1983: 65 notes the surprising, and almost unparalleled, degree to which the audience is privy to his "internal process."

with goals that do not coincide, and in some cases compete, with those of the Danaids, to say nothing of the Aegyptids. As a result, spectators can no longer simply side with or against the Danaids and must now consider the interests of three parties in their evaluations.

There are also indications in the dialogue that, along with their attention, spectators' sympathies ("allegiance") are also intended to shift to Pelasgus and his dilemma. So pronounced is the shift in alignment and allegiance toward Pelasgus that some have asserted the whole play is about his struggle.[530] Pelasgus does appear to invite the audience's sympathies. In having to judge the validity of the Danaids' case, spectators find themselves in a similar position to that of Pelasgus, a connection that may only be strengthened by the identification of Pelasgus with the ideals of democracy and the Danaids with absolute monarchy. The transparency of his motives draws attention to the Danaids' pointed silence; his generosity draws attention to the (apparently) selfish nature of the Danaids' request. For their part, the Danaids appear to repulse audience sympathies. They continue to disregard Pelasgus' doubts regarding the legality of their case, offering only a problematic explanation for their actions and threats of divine anger.

[530] Cf. Burian 2007: 200: "There is general agreement that king Pelasgus is 'the specifically tragic figure' of Aeschylus' *Suppliants*." See Carroll 1996: 105, 105 n.22 and Smith 1995: 84-5 for the concept of spectators' allegiance to characters. According to Smith, "Allegiance denotes that level of engagement at which spectators respond sympathetically or antipathetically towards a character or group of characters. It rests upon an evaluation of the character as representing a desirable (or at least, preferable) set of traits, when compared with other characters within the fiction" (62). Both Carroll and Smith note that allegiance is not an absolute concept but is often created in relation to other characters on stage. For Heath 1987: 91-2, this is a cut and dried case of a shift in focus with its concomitant shift in sympathy. I would argue with Smith that alignment often, but not always, invites allegiance. Although in this case it does, other factors are necessary to distinguish between the case of Pelasgus and of the Danaids. It is worth noting that spectators' allegiance to the Danaids may already be imperfect at best given their refusal to reveal the circumstances of their flight. Yet neither this nor the subsequent shift shows that they are in the wrong. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with the Danaids' position: if, if fact, they are being unjustly hounded by the sons of the Aegyptids, it is understandable that they should seek refuge, even though it might endanger the Argives.

As the focus shifts from their dilemma to that of Pelasgus, and with the introduction of their threats against him, the role of the Danaids begins to shift from that of victim to persecutor.[531]

III.6 Pelasgus: a Sympathetic Audience?

In Pelasgus, spectators have a surrogate who is also a model of democratic virtue. They may have felt an affinity for him simply because, as mentioned above, like them, he must evaluate the Danaids' case and judge accordingly. The openness with which his predicament is laid out may have facilitated this relationship and, at the same time, drawn attention to the audience's comparatively uninformed relationship to the Danaids. But spectators' allegiance is invited by Pelasgus' democratic nature.[532] Despite holding absolute power as king,[533] he employs democratic thinking at every turn and, in doing so, is likely to have appealed to Aeschylus' democratic audience members. When he informs the Danaids that the decision is not his alone (368-9), he explains his position with a primary tenet of democratic government, that in any given matter, the voice of the

[531] The case of Pelasgus is a particularly good one for illustrating the importance of character in Aeschylus as it relates to audience allegiance. Although the audience need not concern itself with Pelasgus as a person (cf. Kitto 1961: 9, Lloyd-Jones 1983: 53, Burian 2007: 205). It is, however, absolutely essential that they take his pronouncements and his behavior into account in evaluating his actions in relation to those of the Danaids.

[532] This is a good example of how political references are not incompatible with literature as such. The allusion to democracy creates a dramatic effect. Cf. Garvie 1969: 143 and the treatment of Burian 2007, though he approaches the matter in another fashion.

[533] Lloyd-Jones 1983: 44, Garvie 1969: 153, and Burian 2007: *passim* have shown that Pelasgus' Greece is not an anachronistic democracy in the Athenian model. Pelasgus appears to have final say in the matter but chooses to appeal to the people (cf. οὐδέ περ κρατῶν (399) and the translation of Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 314: "even though I am ruler (and so could act withot consulting the people, if I wanted to)."). That he need not, but nevertheless shows concern for his people may be thought to make him more admirable in the eyes of democratic Athenians. Cf. Burian 2007: 206. For my purposes, the possibility, discussed by Lloyd-Jones, that the government of Argos was democratic at the time the play was performed and that Pelasgus' appeal would therefore seem reasonable (44), is less important than the effect the allusion to democracy would have on the audience of democratic Athenians.

people should be commensurate with their risk: if the city is defiled in common (τὸ κοινὸν), let the people come together (ξυνῆι) to work toward a cure (366-7) (Cf. Ps.-Xen. 1.2). The Danaids, by contrast, promote absolute rule in the hopes of convincing Pelasgus to judge summarily in their favor (370-5) and do so in a way that is pointedly opposed to Pelasgus' democratic leanings (cf. μονοψήφοισι νεύμασιν, 373) (Johansen-Whittle 1980: 295-6.).[534] And whereas the Danaids are concerned only for their own welfare regardless of what it entails for Argos, Pelasgus appears to be motivated only by concern for the welfare of the Argives (357-8; 366; 398-9; 410), a fact that is not only in keeping with democratic ideology, but an admirable trait in any leader.[535]

And yet, if spectators feel that the Danaids are in the right, or feel a strong antipathy toward the Aegyptids despite any misgivings they might have about the Danaids, they would be likely to have felt disdain at Pelasgus' actions on the grounds that he is weak and ineffectual rather than sympathize with his plight.[536] Pelasgus makes no secret of his inability to act. He does not know what to do (379-80, 397, 407ff.) and repeatedly expresses his fear (346, 379-80). In this light, spectators may have seen his refusal to come to a decision without the Argives not as a testament to his commitment to democracy, but as a pretense to gain time or avoid shouldering the burden by himself, as his fear that the people will blame him for taking the Danaids in might suggest (398-

[534] No secret has been made of the Danaids' appearance and Egyptian heritage, but, until now, these qualities have not translated into "barbaric behavior." This may be taken as the first indication that they harbor underlying, "barbaric" tendencies.
[535] Cf. Burian 2007: 205: "Pelasgus… embodies the Greek virtues of genuine piety and concern for the safety of the state."
[536] Burian 2007: 205 refers to his "increasingly impotent hesitation."

401).[537] Upper-class attendees of the play and those with oligarchic leanings might conclude that the problem lies not with Pelasgus' relationship to democracy but with the inherent failures of the democratic system, whereby an "ideal" democratic ruler such as Pelasgus is prevented from doing what is in the best interest of his people without appealing to them first.[538] Such spectators might have envied the kind of one-man rule endorsed by the Danaids. Criticizing democracy does not, however, appear to be the primary goal of this scene. The play does not, for instance, present an obvious answer to the problem that Pelasgus endorses but fails to implement because of his insistence on involving the people or rejects in favor of a more popular solution.

III.7 Threats of Divine Retribution: the Danaids as Aggressors

Both in the stichomythia and in the kommos, the Danaids deflect inquiry about the circumstances of their flight with the threats of divine retribution should their bid for supplication be rejected. They advise Pelasgus to revere (αἰδοῦ) the suppliant branches placed on the altar (πρύμναν πόλεος ὥδ' ἐστεμμένην, 345) and be on guard against pollution (ἄγος, 375). They observe that the wrath (κότος) of Zeus who watches over suppliants (Ζηνὸς ἱκεσίου, ἱκταίου) weighs heavily (347)[539] and is hard to appease (μένει…κότος δυσπαράθελκτος, 385-6). And these appear to be no idle threats. They

[537] Cf. Ps.-Xen. 2.20 on the evils of a man who is not of the people but chooses to live in a democracy so as commit evils without the city's notice. Pelasgus' fear of the people's opinion points to a more contentious relationship with the people than portraits of him as an ideal proponent of democracy might suggest.
[538] For an extreme statement of the downside of involving the people in decision-making, cf. Ps. Xen. 1.5-9, though this may reflect more accurately later developments in the Athenian democracy.
[539] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 278-9 give 347 to Pelasgus, noting that there is no indication of a change of speaker at 346 or 347 and that "Aeschylean stichomythiae regularly end byone or two longer utterances of a final character pronounced by one or both of the partners in the discussion…." This would reduce the number of times the Danaids assert the wrath of the gods but show Pelasgus' awareness of the danger early on.

do not compel Pelasgus to decide the Danaids' case without the Argives, but he does not doubt their power and so finds himself in a difficult position (377-80, 407ff.).[540] With these words the Danaids seem to have abandoned the "reverent words"[541] and submissive approach advised by their father (194-203); their boldness suggests that they may no longer be in a position of weakness (cf. θρασυστομεῖν γὰρ οὐ πρέπει τοὺς ἥσσονας (203), "it is not fitting for the weak to speak boldly") (Burian 2007: 204). At the same time, the Danaids' more aggressive stance is coupled with a particularly questionable statement of their reasons for fleeing marriage to the Aegyptids. In answer to Pelasgus' insistence that they flee in accordance with Egyptian law, the Danaids merely state that they are fleeing a γάμος δύσφρων, a "distressing marriage," and pray that they "not ever, in any way, become prisoner to the power of men" (μή τί ποτ' οὖν γενοίμαν ὑποχείριος κράτεσιν ἀρσένων· 392). δύσφρων is merely a value judgment that cannot be expected to dissuade Pelasgus from his position.[542] Their prayer is also problematic. In Athens, women were subject to the power of a κύριος, a male representative, whether a father, husband, or legal guardian. Thus, one can interpret their refusal to submit to men in general as a violent and absolute rejection of the legitimate authority of men in any form, including, but not limited to, marriage.[543] And yet, this pronouncement is similar

[540] Despite the conventional nature of Pelasgus' response to the Danaid's ἄγος φυλάσσου, ἄγος μὲν εἴη τοῖς ἐμοῖς παλιγκότοις, "let there be pollution for my enemies," (cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 297-8), spectators may wonder who exactly Pelasgus' enemies are at this stage.

[541] In fact, whereas Danaus advised his daughters to speak reverent words (αἰδοῖα…ἔπη), they now demand reverence (αἰδοῦ, 345) from Pelasgus, though for the gods, not themselves. See, however, Cairns 1993: 184, who argues in his discussion of this play that "both suppliant and supplicated are expected to show *aidôs* in a reciprocal manner in connection with this supplication…."

[542] Von Fritz 1962: 161 argues that this assertion implies that the Danaids have no better reason for fleeing.

[543] κῦρος (391), one of Pelasgus' two formulations of the Aegyptids' authority over the Danaids which the Danaids reject under the category of κράτεσιν at 393, may convey a sense of legitimacy and contain an allusion to a κύριος. Cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 309. It has been suggested that the Danaids cannot reject the authority of all men because of their relationship to their father, but they have just ignored their

to the one at 335 regarding slavery (μὴ γένωμαι δμωὶς).[544] ὑποχείριος κράτεσιν ἀρσένων may be a misguided characterization of the relationship of a wife to her husband, but it could just as easily describe the relationship of a prisoner of war to her captive or of an enslaved woman to her master and leaves open the possibility that the Danaids have a valid complaint.[545]

Although the playwright raises questions about the Danaids in this scene, he does not allow spectators to dismiss them entirely. Despite their aggressive stance, the Danaids do not alienate those who would continue to support their cause. They at no point incriminate themselves, and they consistently maintain the justice of their cause. The Danaids do not shy away from predicating the efficacy of their threats of divine wrath on the justice of their position. They appeal to Themis (359-60); they advise Pelasgus to heed Zeus, the guardian of "mortals who appeal to those nearby but do not win the justice due to them by law" (οἳ τοῖς πέλας προσήμενοι δίκας οὐ τυγχάνουσιν ἐννόμου, 383-4)[546] and to judge in such a way that the gods will approve (κρῖνε σέβας τὸ πρὸς θεῶν) (396); they advise Pelasgus to take Dike as his ally (395) and to do what is just (τὸ δίκαιον, 405-6). Once again, they, at least, appear convinced of their case, and, in this light, their threats may be seen as justifiable, though certainly unusual for a group of young girls. After all, if the Danaids are in the right, they are merely stating what may

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father's advice in their treatment of Pelasgus which may lead spectators to conclude that they are bucking under his authority as well. Ireland 1974: 21 acknowledges that "[a]t first sight it would appear that these are expressions of generalised opposition to the very idea of marriage itself."

[544] Cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 306 and their note on κρατοῦσι.

[545] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 309 assert that "[t]he Danaids see their consignment to their cousins simply as total subjection to the physical power of enemies." They do not address the possibility that this in fact reflects the reality of the situation but observe that ὑποχείριος "is more often found in political or military contexts."

[546] Zeus is the traditional god of suppliants, particularly in the *Odyssey*. Cf. lines 347 and 385 and see Lloyd-Jones 1971: 30 and Pedrick 1982: 129, 133-35

very well be the case: Pelasgus and the Argives might indeed suffer if they anger the gods by rejecting a deserving suppliant and committing an injustice. Thus, one can argue that, despite holes in their case, their behavior is consistent with that of one aggressively prosecuting a just cause. Given what is at stake and what can be known with any certainty about the Danaids, it should be no surprise to the audience that Pelasgus needs to think deeply before coming to a decision (407ff.).

III.8 Divine Justice versus Egyptian Law

Pelasgus asserts that the Danaids must flee in accordance with Egyptian law (νόμῳ πόλεως, κατὰ νόμους τοὺς οἴκοθεν) because no one would oppose the Aegytpids if they had a right to the Danaids on the basis of it (387-9; 390-1). The fact that the Danaids fail to address the legal aspect in their response is generally taken to be suspicious, if not damning evidence that favors the Aegyptids' rightful claim upon them.[547] The question is how this revelation would affect the opinion of Aeschylus' Athenian audience. Given our scanty information regarding international relations in the first half of the fifth century, it might be safest for us to assume that, because Pelasgus states it, the audience would accept as fact that no one would help the Danaids under these circumstances.[548] It is not clear, however, that an Athenian audience would expect

[547] Garvie 1969: 220 thinks it is "interesting." According to Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 34 and II 1980: 305, with their silence, the Danaids "indicate that his statement of the position according to Egyptian law is substantially true." Cf. Turner 2001: 33: "the Danaids never argue the strictly legal merits of their abstinence from marriage" but "resort instead to strident histrionics." See also Lévy 1985: 36; Zeitlin 1992: 211.

[548] It might generally have been considered imprudent to invite the animosity of other poleis by accepting suppliants to whom other states were still hostile (as opposed to victims of ostracism, for instance) unless one was interested in entering upon a war with those cities. See, however, Naiden 2004: 75, who suggests that it is more important that suppliants are legally innocent in the eyes of those whom they supplicate rather than those whom they flee. Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 35 suggest that "[t]he Egyptian law assumed

a Greek state to recognize the laws of another Greek polis as binding in the absence of specific treaties (σύμβολα), let alone the laws of a non-Greek community.[549] The fact that Egypt was still a member of the Persian empire at the time of the *Suppliants*' production and had fought against the Greeks in the war would make it even less likely that spectators would respect its laws,[550] all the more because the Aegyptids' claim to the Danaids may have been won in war. After all, had the Persians and their allies won the war, they would have had a "rightful" claim to Athens. Spectators who identify the Aegyptids' Egypt with its contemporary counterpart may even have considered Pelasgus' position a patent act of cowardice, comparable to that of the Medizers who recognized Persia's authority in order to shirk their duty to defend Greece. And if they considered Pelasgus' statement a miscalculation or, worse, an act of betrayal, they would judge the Danaids' assertion of divine law in answer to claims of Egyptian law (395-6, 402ff.) not as an attempt to avoid the issue so much as the valid assertion of a higher law that supercedes Egyptian law.[551]

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by Pelasgus corresponds closely enough to Athenian law and practice respecting girls' control and marriage by their male next of kin for the legal position outlined in *Supp*. to have been understandable by Aeschylus' audience." They seem to ignore the issue of Danaus' hostility to the Aegyptids. Cf. Macurdy 1944: 97. See also MacKinnon 1978: 78. Turner 2001: 33 observes that Danaus is not treated as the Danaids' next-of-kin in the play.

[549] Sheets 1994 argues in favor of Greek international law in the time of the Peloponnesian War to the degree that shared Greek conceptions of law and justice formed the basis upon which treaties were made and affected the actions of these states. These assumptions are, however, unlikely to have extended to non-Greek states.

[550] One might object that these are not the historical Egyptians and therefore would not be burdened by contemporary Athenian views of Egypt. One might also argue that the Egyptians were victims of the Persian empire, and that the fact that Athens would come to her aid in an uprising against the empire shortly after the *Suppliants* was performed (in 460? 459?; cf. Thuc. 1.104.2, Diod. 11.74.3-4) reflects a more positive view of Egypt that would translate into greater openness toward her mythical counterpart.

[551] The Danaids may undercut their case in the second assertion of this "higher law." According to the Danaids, Zeus is ἀμφοτέροις ὁμαίμων (402) "related to both." This may be an appeal to Pelasgus on the basis of the kinship both the Danaids and the Argives share with Zeus. Spectators may, however, take this as a reference to Zeus's kinship to both the Danaids and the Aegyptids, which seems to undercut the Danaids' appeals to kinship in order for Zeus to destroy the Aegyptids. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 319 reject this interpretation and, reading ἀμφοτέρ' for ἀμφοτέροις, translate it abstractly "over both these

III.9 THE PERSISTENCE OF IO

As the action intensifies in the present, it is not surprising that the Danaids spend less time exploring the ancient past. And yet references to Io and her story do not disappear entirely. In the midst of their pleas to Pelasgus, the Danaids compare themselves to a calf being chased by wolves and mooing to its herdsman for help:

> ἴδε με τὰν ἱκὲτιν φυγάδα περίδρομον,
> λυκοδίωκτον ὡς δάμαλιν ἄμ πέτραις
> ἠλιβάτοις, ἵν᾽ ἀλκᾶι πίσυνος μέμυ-
> κε φράζουσα βοτῆρι μόχθους.
>
> (350-3)
>
> Look upon me, a suppliant, an exile running around
> Like a heifer chased by wolves on a steep crag
> where, trusting in its protection,[552] she gives a moo
> that conveys her troubles to the herdsman.

The comparison has rhetorical value. By casting Pelasgus and Argos as a herdsman, it not only places them in the role of a protector, but also as caretakers who are responsible for the Danaids and have a stake in their welfare. Like Danaus' analogy of the hawks and doves (223-5), the cow-wolf comparison characterizes the Danaids as helpless victims and their pursuers as savage beasts. It also conveys a natural incompatibility of the two. At the same time, by comparing themselves to a cow pursued by a malevolent beast, the Danaids appear to be identifying once more with Io (cf. Murray 1958: 25-6, Johansen-

courses [i.e., accepting or rejecting the Danaids] there watches, as guardian of kinship, Zeus…." They argue that "an allusion to Zeus' position as progenitor of both Danaids and Aegyptiads would fatally weaken the argument of the Danaids at a moment when they are urging Pelasgus to take their side without fear of the consequences, nor do they allude to the kinship between Zeus and their hated cousins elsewhere in the play (cf. 168ff, 531ff., 590ff., 1062ff.)." The fact that the Danaids would not intentionally assert Zeus's connection to the Aegyptids here and do not do so elsewhere, however, does not mean that the audience is not intended to understand the reference in this way or to appreciate it as a secondary reference. Pelasgus will refer to their kinship less than fifty lines later (449, 474).

[552] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 282 takes ἀλκᾶι to refer to the rocks, comparing the safety they afford the calf to that which the altar gives the Danaids.

Whittle II 1980: 281, Belfiore 2000: 57).[553] Although this comparison fails to provide any new insights into the relationship between the Danaids and their ancestor, it reinforces the idea that they are following in her footsteps and may continue to do so.

IV A Brief Interlude: Unjust, Unholy, Brutal Aegyptids

The subsequent choral lyric serves as a bridge between the scene just discussed, which, at best, offers an ambiguous depiction of the Danaids, and what is arguably the Danaids' least sympathetic scene, in which they force Pelasgus to choose in their favor not because of the justice of their cause but because they threaten to pollute Argos incurably should he fail to do so. Interestingly, this song invites the audience's sympathy for the Danaids by presenting in brief the most damning picture of the Aegyptids thus far in the play. As before, the Danaids claim justice and piety for their cause (419, 430, 435-6, 437; 419, 437) while accusing the Aegyptids of impiety (ἐκβολαῖς δυσθέοις, 421-2) and *hybris* (γνῶθι δ' ὕβριν ἀνέρων, 426).[554] In this case, however, they offer a tangible example of the Aegyptids' crimes: they ask that Pelasgus not watch the Aegyptids snatch them from the seat of the gods (μηδ' ἴδηις μ' ἐξ ἑδρᾶν πολυθέων ῥυσιασθεῖσαν, 423-4), lead them away like a horse ([μ'] ἀγομέναν ἱππαδὸν ἀμπύκων, 429-30) and grasp at their dresses (πέπλων τ' ἐπιλαβὰς ἐμῶν, 432). If spectators take the Danaids seriously, and the behavior of the Egyptian Herald later in the play (822ff.) suggests that they

[553] The Danaids' comparison can even be understood as an explicit appeal to Pelasgus on the basis of the Io story, with which he is now familiar and in accordance with which, as the cow's savior, he would play the role of Zeus.

[554] Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 31 rightfully dismiss any general implication of the Danaids' reference to "the *hybris* of men" in this case, which clearly refers to the Aegyptids' actions.

should, the Aegyptids have no qualms about disrespecting the gods[555] nor about abusing and dehumanizing their prospective wives. This would certainly be proof of the Aegyptids' injustice, impiety, and *hybris*, regardless of any legal right they may have upon the Danaids (cf. Wilamowitz 1914: 14). It suggests that the Aegyptids intend to treat the Danaids as their slaves and, thus, that the Danaids' notion of right and wrong is not misplaced and that their fears of the Aegyptids are entirely justified. These actions would indeed be worthy of divine wrath (cf. 427, 435-6, 437), though one might expect it to be directed against the Aegyptids rather than the Argives.[556] To hand the Danaids over to such men would certainly be a betrayal (cf. 420).

V YET ANOTHER THREAT TO ARGOS

In the scene that concludes their encounter, the Danaids force Pealsgus' hand by threatening to hang themselves and desecrate the statues of the gods if he does not come to their aid against the Aegyptids. The Danaids' behavior in this scene admits both a sympathetic and an unsympathetic reading. According to the most common view, the Danaids have placed Pelasgus in an impossible situation. Despite his attempts to extricate himself from it, the Danaids manipulate him into accepting them despite the probable injustice of their case and the likelihood that it will bring harm to his city. On the other hand, spectators may conclude that Pelasgus is attempting to shirk his duty to the Danaids. In doing so, he forces the Danaids into desperate straits, which in turn,

[555] Though their supplication of the Argives is still in question, the Danaids appear to think of themselves as suppliants of the gods simply by virtue of stationing themselves by the altar. This is most likely the force of their reference to themselves as suppliants in the context of being dragged from the altar (429).
[556] The most famous example is Athena's punishment of Ajax for the rape of Cassandra (Apollod. *Ep*. 5.22-6.6).

regrettably endangers Pelasgus and his city and forces him into action. Spectators' interpretation of the scene may very well have depended in large part on their views of the Danaids and Pelasgus going in to the scene.

V.1 Pelasgus' Decision? Doubts about the Danaids

Much of Pelasgus' speech seems to weigh against the Danaids. References to battle (439), to pain (442), and, indirectly, to the sacking of the city (443) remind spectators of the trouble Argos faces on account of the Danaids. It is Pelasgus' emphasis on kindred blood, however, that may have the most damaging effect on the Danaids' case. Pelasgus dismisses the effect of lost property and offensive words because they can both be remedied (443-8). The thing he fears most from a war with the Aegyptids is the shedding of ὅμαιμον αἷμον (449). Whether Pelasgus has in mind his ties to the Argives, who are certainly his ὅμαιμοι, the Danaids' ties to the Aegyptids (Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 354-5) or the Argives' ties to the Aegyptids on the analogy of their ties to the Danaids (cf. Belfiore 2000: 42, Sandin 2003: 202) is not immediately clear. Given the emphasis placed on family connections elsewhere in the *Suppliants* and the lack of specification in this case, it is likely that all of these meanings are at play. Whether or not Pelasgus explicitly acknowledges Argos' family connection to the Aegyptids through Io, its existence is problematic for the Danaids. It undermines their claim upon the Argives to the degree that their claim depends upon their kinship to them, and it means that the Danaids are asking the Argives to fight a war against their, admittedly distant, relatives, thus adding another layer of transgression to the proceedings. Worse yet for the Danaids, Pelasgus' reference to shedding the blood of kin on the battlefield would no doubt remind

spectators of the much less honorable murder of the Aegyptids by their kin in their own beds (Gantz 1978: 282, Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 37, Zeitlin 1992: 208). If this is indeed what the future holds—spectators would no doubt be wondering how to reconcile this element of the myth with the play's threat of impending war—Pelasgus would be perceived as wise to wash his hands of the Danaids.

On the other hand, spectators may have discounted much of what Pelasgus says on the grounds that he appears to be stalling for time and will say anything to avoid acting. For the third time in two scenes, Pelasgus states that he is at an impasse. He observes that Argos must battle one side or the other (439-40) and that no outcome (καταστροφή) is without pain (442). Yet rather than come to a painful but necessary decision, Pelasgus announces that he will "bypass" (παροίχομαι) the quarrel and prays that matters turn out well παρὰ γνώμην (452-4), "contrary to his expectations."[557] He will instead appeal to the gods through sacrifice and oracles (450-1), which he deems πημονῆς ἄκη (451), "cures for suffering."[558] This is a pious sentiment and would have found favor with some of Aeschylus' audience. Others, however, might have judged Pelasgus' piety a poor replacement for action[559] and considered this another attempt to shirk his duties: in the previous scene, Pelasgus fails to act because he must consult his people; here it is not the people, of whom there is no mention, but the gods to whom he insists that he must appeal. His comment at 452-3, that he would rather be ignorant than

[557] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 357 suggest that Pelasgus is not really giving up but "reaffirming as final his previous refusal to get personally involved." His statement seems more decisive than this, however.
[558] The scholiast also appears to believe that Pelasgus' "decision" is not to decide but to turn to the gods is also the sentiment of the scholiast. Pelasgus says that he will bypass the quarrel immediately after stating that it is necessary to appeal to the gods. The scholiast paraphrases: καὶ τοῦτο ποιῶν ἐκτὸς ἔσομαι τοῦ νείκους θεοῖς ὑπηρετῶν, "and doing this [i.e. sacrificing] I will be outside of the quarrel, serving the gods."
[559] Cf. the first interaction of Eteocles and the Chorus in the *Septem*, in which they debate putting one's faith entirely in the hands of the gods and acting in the hopes that it will meet their approval.

wise in evils (θέλω δ' ἄιδρις μᾶλλον ἢ σοφὸς κακῶν—"ignorance is bliss"), though understandable, ill befits a ruler and might have reinforced the impression that he is failing his people.[560] Even his fear of shedding the blood of his "kin," the Aegyptids, may be seen as a pretense. Thus, spectators may have looked expectantly to the Danaids to force Pelasgus into action.

V.2 The Threat: It Could be Worse?

Having failed to convince Pelasgus on the merits of their argument (cf. Turner 2001: 35), the Danaids threaten to use their clothing to hang themselves from the statues of the gods and pollute the city if Pelasgus refuses to come to their aid. Modern English-speaking critics of the *Suppliants* almost universally condemn this move, calling it, for example, "devilish" (Kitto 1961: 11), an act of treachery (Murray 1969: 79) and "incipient violence" (Conacher 1996: 91; cf. Belfiore 2000: 42), an "unscrupulous masterstroke" (Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 360), and a "bold stratagem that reveals the full extent of their ruthless self-absorption" (Burian 2007: 205).[561] These harsh judgments may in part be a function of the way in which the Danaids reveal their plan to Pelasgus:

[560] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 359 attempt to remedy the problem by reading the issue as one of "experience" more than intelligence or wisdom. Sympathetic spectators may have done the same.

[561] Parker 1983: 185, 185 n.228 argues that using the threat of suicide-at-the-altar-induced pollution to get one's way would not, in and of itself, have struck the audience as wrong and was in fact a viable "final resource" of the suppliant. A closer examination of his comparanda, however, suggests that the situations are not exactly parallel. Parker cites this scene as well as the Athenians' threat to remain at Delphi until they die unless the priestess gives them another oracular response (Hdt. 7.142.2) and Menelaus' threat to kill Helen and himself in order to gain Theonoe's help in Euripides' *Helen* (985-7). In Herodotus, the problem is not so much the pollution that will be caused by the Athenians' dead bodies as the fact that they will never leave the temple. In the *Helen*, Menelaus seems to be appealing to Theonoe's sense of right and wrong more than her fear of pollution. He tells her that their deaths will be an ἀθάνατον ἄλγος σοί, ψόγος δὲ σῶι πατρί (E. *Hel.* 987), an "undying pain for you and a reproach to your father." In this case, Theonoe's father, Proteus was bound by Hermes to keep Helen safe for her husband (46-8). Thus there can be no question that by allowing danger to befall both Helen and Menelaus, Theonoe would be contradicting

ΧΟ. πολλῶν ἄκουσον τέρματ᾽ αἰδοίων λόγων.
ΠΕ. ἤκουσα, καὶ λέγοις ἄν· οὔ με φεύξεται.
ΧΟ. ἔχω στρόφους ζώνας τε, συλλαβὰς πέπλων.
ΠΕ. τάχ᾽ ἄν γυναιξὶ ταῦτα συμπρεπῆ πέλοι.
ΧΟ. ἐκ τῶνδε τοίνυν, ἴσθι, μηχανὴ καλὴ.
ΠΕ. λέξον· τίν᾽ αὐδην τήνδε γηρυθεῖ᾽ ἔσηι;
ΧΟ. εἰ μή τι πιστὸν τῶιδ᾽ ὑποστήσεις στόλσι
ΠΕ. τί σοι περαίνει μηχανὴ συζωμάτων·
ΧΟ. νέοις πίναξιν βρέτεα κοσμῆσαι τάδε.
ΠΕ. αἰνιγματῶδες τοὖπος· ἀλλ᾽ ἁπλῶς φράσον.
ΧΟ. ἐκ τῶνδ᾽ ὅπως τάχιστ᾽ ἀπάγξασθαι θεῶν.
ΠΕ. ἤκουσα μαστικτῆρα καρδίας λόγον.
ΧΟ. ξυνῆκας· ὠμμάτωσα γὰρ σαφέσερον.
(455-467)

CH. Hear the end of many respectful words
PE. I am listening; speak. It won't escape me.
CH. I have bands and girdles, the things that keep my dress together
PE. These things would, I suppose, befit women.
CH. And know that from these things there is a fine device.
PE. Speak. What is this thing you are trying to tell me?
CH. If you do not give this band some pledge…
PE. What will you do with the device of the bands?
CH. adorn these statues with new votive tablets.
PE. These are riddling words. Speak simply
CH. hang myself from these gods as quickly as possible
PE. I heard a word that scourges my heart.
CH. Then you understood—I have given you eyes to see clearly.

The Danaids threatended to kill themselves and even challenged the gods once before at the conclusion of the opening song (154-61; 168-74). This is different according to the standard reading. Whereas in the first instance the Danaids appeared desperate and fearful, this passage reveals cool calculation (Sandin 2003: 204, Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 366). Their threat is not an act of desperation but a μηχανὴ καλή (459), a "fine device."[562] It is not stated plainly and with regret as a necessary evil, but drawn out and

the will of the gods. In the case of Pelasgus, there will be pollution, but it may not be directed against him and his city depending on whether or not the Danaids' case is just.

[562] It should be noted, however, that the most sinister element of this statement, the use of καλὴ to describe the Danaids' unsavory plan, is the result of an emendation by Turnebus. The manuscripts read καλεῖ, the plan "calls" from these things, which Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 364 consider absurd.

presented in the form of a riddle, as if to toy with Pelasgus. The Danaids appear to take pleasure in his pain: they know he has grasped their meaning when they see him suffering (466-7) (Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 366, 360).[563] Spectators may even have seen the comparison of the Danaids' hanging bodies to votive tablets (463) as sacrilegious. At the very least, they are willing to endanger Argos for their own welfare. Read in this fashion, the delivery of the threat offers evidence of the Danaids' cruel, violent, and manipulative nature. It suggests that they may in fact have misrepresented their situation to Pelasgus and to the audience and encourages skepticism with regard to their account of the Aegyptids. It also suggests that they are capable of the cruelty and violence attributed to them by myth in the murder of their husbands (cf. Conacher 1996: 91, Gantz 1978, Belfiore 2000: 42). The Danaids would thus complete their transition from victims to perpetrators, thereby reversing "the usual power structure between the suppliant and the supplicated" (Turner 2001: 36).[564] Spectators who interpreted the passage in this way would find little to approve in the Danaids and be tempted to sympathize wholly with Pelasgus and the Argives.[565] This unflattering depiction is difficult to reconcile with positive accounts of the Danaids.

And yet, the standard reading of this passage may not sufficiently account for spectators' expectations based on their familiarity with the myth of the Danaids. By the end of the speech that leads up to the Danaids' threat, Pelasgus has decided not to come to the Danaids' aid against the Aegyptids. Spectators are left wondering what the

[563] They describe the Chorus's remark at 467 as "triumphant condescension."
[564] One can take the Danaids at their word when they say that this is the τέρματα, the "end" of the respectful words (αἰδοίων λόγων, 455) which their father advised (194), and which characterize the act of supplication. See Cairns 1993: 184, Turner 2001: 35.
[565] Conacher 1996: 91: "The Danaids have eventually won their victory over King Pelasgus, but paradoxically our sympathy for the beleaguered King ahs tended gradually to overshadow our earlier sympathy for the Danaids…"

Danaids will do. The text has just alluded to the mythical Danaids' solution to the problem with Pelasgus' reference to the shedding of ὅμαιμον αἷμον (449, see above), and it would not be surprising if at this stage spectators familiar with the myth expected to see Aeschylus' Danaids initiate plans to marry the Aegyptids and murder them on their wedding night. The Danaids' promise of a τέρματ' αἰδοίων λόγων (455), an "end of respectful words," with its implication that the Danaids may be embarking on a more aggressive, if not a shameful, path,[566] would do nothing to disabuse spectators of this notion. So, when the Danaids' speak of a plan that depends on the things that hold their clothing together (στρόφους, cf. A. *Sept*. 872; συλλαβὰς πέπλων) and their girdles (ζώνας), a word that can refer euphemistically to marriage (cf. E. *IT* 204) or sex (as in "loosening the ζώνη," 457, 459), spectators may very well have supposed that the Danaids are speaking not of hanging themselves, but of putting the Aegyptids at ease prior to murdering them. Line 461 does little to clear up the matter. Though usually read as an ultimatum, "unless you give this band some pledge [we will hang ourselves]," it can be taken as a statement of fact: "if you don't give us a pledge [we will be forced to act]." This line could apply just as well to their plan to murder the Aegyptids as it would their plan to kill themselves. And though line 463 proves to be an appropriate, if disturbing, metaphor for the Danaids' suicide, spectators would not be aware of this until the plan is revealed.

It is likely, therefore, that many in Aeschylus' audience would have been just as surprised as Pelasgus to learn what the Danaids have in store. And they may have been relieved to learn that the Danaids are merely planning to kill themselves: the suicide

[566] This could also be understood to mean "the culmination of my respectful words." See Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 360.

threat involves a level of sacrilege and shows a lack of concern for the welfare of Argos, but it does not involve the shedding of kindred blood or the murder of a husband by his own wife. And the fundamentally passive nature of the act may have been thought to be more in keeping with the behavior expected of women. Pious audience members or those who expected the gods to reign supreme in their tragedies may, however, have had some difficulty deciding whether the murder of one's family member was indeed worse than threatening to insult the gods by defiling their statues.

Even this problem might disappear, however, if spectators supposed that the Danaids were absolutely sincere in their desire to kill themselves. The preceding analysis suggests that whatever "cool calculation" is on display in this passage is in fact the poet's rather than the Danaids' and that its intended victim the audience rather than Pelasgus. With the air of calculation and manipulation stripped away from the Danaids' behavior, the Danaids' threat can be seen for what it is: an act of fear and desperation.[567] The Danaids are out of choices and intend to kill themselves as quickly as possible (cf. ὅπως τάχιστ' at line 465). The statues and the sashes on their dresses afford them this possibility. If spectators view the scene in this way, they might still judge the Danaids to be "self-absorbed," but not, perhaps, "ruthless." The suicide could also be seen as following suit with their earlier promise to to hang themselves if the gods do not come to their aid (154-61), which they might assume from Pelasgus' failure to help them.

From Pelasgus' response it is not clear whether he sees the Danaids' threat as a treacherous scheme or as a gesture of desperation. There is no question that the Danaids

[567] This reading is particularly suited to the view that the Danaids are attempting to ensure the safety of their father. Cf. Rösler 2007: 179, who argues that with the knowledge of the oracle, the "extravagant threat…now appears in a different light—as the ultimate consequence of the daughters' duty to their father."

have put Pelasgus in a difficult decision. The matter is δυσπαλαιστά, "hard to wrestle with," like a great river of evils (κακῶν πλῆθος ποταμὸς) and a bottomless sea of ruin without harbor (ἄτης δ' ἄβυσσον πέλαγος…κοὐδαμοῦ λιμὴν κακῶν).[568] But Pelasgus' situation would be the same regardless of the justice or injustice of the Danaids' methods and claims. His description of the Danaids' suicide as an "unsurpassable pollution" (473, μίασμα οὐχ ὑπερτοξεύσιμον) conveys the magnitude of the threat without offering grounds for judging it. Despite the fact that he does not directly condemn the Danaids, however, his account of the decision in their favor may have sewn doubts in the audience. In framing the decision between war and pollution, Pelasgus may be alluding to the problematic nature of a war between kin and the possibility that the Aegyptids have a right over the Danaids when he calls the Aegyptids "the sons of Aegyptus who share the same blood as you" (ὁμαίμοις παισὶν Αἰγύπτου σέθεν, 474). He seems to trivializes further the Danaids' cause by complaining that "it is a bitter expense for men to bloody the plain on account of women (476-7)[569]: in addition to implying that the Danaids' "motive is trivial or at least inadequate" (Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 375), this sentiment, which may be conventional,[570] reinforces the subordinate status of women and suggests that Pelasgus might side with the Aegyptids on principal, regardless of the justice of their position. In spite of these reservations, however,

[568] Tarkow 1970 addresses Pelasgus' use of water imagery.

[569] πῶς οὐχὶ τἀνάλωμα γίγνεται πικρόν,
ἄνδρας γυναικῶν οὕνεχ' αἱμάξαι πέδον;

[570] Cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 375, who notes a similar view of women at *Ag.* 62, 448, 823-4, and 1453.

Pelasgus chooses to side with the Danaids out of fear for Zeus "who watches over suppliants" (478-9).[571]

VI Manipulating the People

From this point on in the play, Pelasgus pursues the Danaids' cause without hesitation. This abrupt shift is sometimes accepted without question (see, e.g., Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 376). But Pelasgus' zealousness causes him to embark on a plan to manipulate his people into ratifying his decision. This willingness to bypass his people may have affected spectators' opinion of Pelasgus in a way that would depend on their view of democracy. More importantly, it problematizes the act of persuasion. In detailing how they can overcome the shortcomings of their case by manipulating the emotions of their audience, Pelasgus' plan points to a shaky foundation for the Danaids' case and draws attention to the Danaids' previous attempts to manipulate their audience.

VI.1 Challenging Democracy

Critics often describe Pelasgus as a kind of ideal democratic leader,[572] but the way in which he implements his decision paints a slightly less than ideal picture of democracy. Pelasgus is no absolute ruler. As promised (366-9, 398-401), he will indeed appeal to the Argives.[573] The fact remains, however, that the decision has been made without them (cf. 510), and it is therefore no surprise that spectators see Pelasgus

[571] The fact that Pelasgus cites fear as his primary motivator, even if it is fear of Zeus, may have disturbed some in the audience.
[572] Griffith 1998: 29, Zeitlin 1990: 108, and 1992: 212, 214, 218, and Turner 2001: 37, 46-7. Cf. Kitto 1961: 12 and Garvie 1969: 153 n.5. Burian 2007 argues that he is not bound to rule democratically, but the fact that his behavior is instinctually democratic may be thought to make him all the more ideal.
[573] As Sommerstein 1997: 75 notes, he does not simply bypass the Argives. The appearance of democracy at least remains intact.

"obtaining this decision [from the people] by blatant manipulation" (Sommerstein 1997: 75).[574] Danaus should place branches on the altars of the gods so that all of the citizens will see the sign of supplication and

> μηδ' ἀπορριφθῆι λόγος
> ἐμοῦ κάτ'· ἀρχῆς γὰρ φιλαίτιος λεώς.
> καὶ γὰρ τάχ' ἄν τις οἰκτίσας ἰδὼν τάδε
> ὕβριν μὲν ἐχθήρειεν ἄρσενος στόλου,
> ὑμῖν δ' ἄν εἴη δῆμος εὐμενέστερος·
> τοῖς ἥσσοσιν γὰρ πᾶς τις εὐνοίας φέρει.
> (484-9)
>
> [so that] no argument is cast
> against me;[575] for the people love to blame authority.
> For as soon as someone sees these things they will feel pity,
> and they will hate the *hybris* of the male band,
> and the people will be better disposed toward you:
> after all, everyone bears goodwill to those who are the weaker.

Pelasgus' strategy lays bare the deficiencies of the Danaids' case as well as the means one might use to overcome them. He faces a skeptical audience. Taken in conjunction with his earlier fears of his people (399-401; cf. 273), lines 484-5 suggest that he is not universally adored by his people and must take pains to avoid their disapproval. He

[574] Sandin 2003: 205-6 notes that "Regardless of the Danaids' dubious means of persuasion, and the ultimately self-serving reasons for taking on their cause…Pelasgus has now become their whole-hearted champion, and not only politically but morally."

[575] This requires accepting (as most modern editors, including Page, do) Headlam's emendation of the manuscript reading ἐμοῦ· κάτ' ἀρχῆς despite the reservations of Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 380 (who also settle on Headlam's emendation) regarding the use of κάτα and the genitive with ἀπορριφθῆι and the rarity of "an elided postponed prep….before a syntactical pause." It is unclear how to understand the phrase if the subjuntive is independent, "let no word be uttered against me." Danaus, to whom the words are addressed, is unlikely to speak unkind words against Pelasgus and has no power to stop anyone else from doing so (cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 379). The original reading, in which ἐμοῦ depends on λόγος and κάτα is taken with ἀρχῆς, "let no word of me be uttered," is possible. It would also imply deviousness on the part of Pelasgus. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 380 finds no fault with this reading on grammatical grounds and rejects the reading for the sole reason that "none of the interpretations admitted by the clause μηδ' ἀπορριφθῆι λόγος ἐμοῦ is acceptable." According to Johansen-Whittle, "it is impossible to see why he should specifically forbid mention of his own part in the matter" seeing as how Pelasgus' involvement will become clear when he sends his men with Danaus. Yet Pelasgus only sends men after he is corrected by Danaus (cf. 500: εὖ γὰρ ὁ ξένος λέγει).

himself was unconvinced by the facts of the Danaids' case and does not intend to hold them up to the Argives for scrutiny. By establishing the Danaids as suppliants, Pelasgus will play upon his people's expectations regarding women who seek supplication, predisposing the Argives to the Danaids' cause and circumventing the facts (cf. Fisher 1992: 268). He shows the same intention to control the Argives' response to the Danaids when he assures them that, with the help of persuasion and fortune (523), he will make the commons (τὸ κοινὸν) "well-disposed" (εὐμενὲς) and instruct Danaus as to what sort of things he must say win the people over (518-20).[576]

VI.2 Manipulating the Audience

Pelasgus' intention to manipulate the Argives is dramatically effective in that it allows the Danaids' cause to move forward without revealing the facts of their case to the audience. Does Argos' democratic nature have any greater significance in the *Suppliants* as a whole?[577] Was Aeschylus' democratic city intended to remind spectators of contemporary Argos?[578] Or were the democratic leanings of Argos supposed to remind Athenians of their own democracy (cf. Lloyd-Jones 1983: 44 and Sommerstein 1997: 75-

[576] Danaus' behavior in this scene may also fit into the context of democracy's vulnerability to manipulation. He requests and receives an escort of local attendants and guards to protect him from the Argives as he approaches the altars of the gods (492-496; 500). Although this guard is only temporary—he receives a permanent bodyguard later in the play—the hint of a tyranny and the opposition between Danaus and the Argive people may have roused spectators' suspicions. See below for the relationship between bodyguards and tyranny.

[577] According to Garvie 1968: 143, Argos' democracy is "dramatically irrelevant or over-emphasized. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 61, 67 and seems to agree but explains references to democracy in this play by emphasize the role it will undoubtedly play later in the trilogy. See also Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 29.

[578] Forrest 1960: 240 argues that the *Suppliants* "shows us more clearly than anything else the gratitude of Aeschylus and the other radicals to Argos for her acceptance of and support for Themistokles [in 470]." See Lloyd-Jones 1983: 44, 45 for further discussion of this view. Cf. Lesky 1983: 69.

76)? Though far from ideal, the workings of Argos' system is not so different from what fifth-century Athenians might have expected from democracy. Those with experience in the Assembly would no doubt recognize an arrangement in which leaders were often at odds with their people, where leading citizens attempted to manipulate the masses into doing what they thought best while the masses reserved the right to chastize their leaders should they fail. Thus, views of their own democracy may have affected their opinion of Pelasgus' handling of the Argives. Ardent supporters of the democracy might have bristled at the ostensibly democratic leader's willingness to conceal the real circumstances of the Danaids' request for safety and his willingness to sway the Argives' opinion by any means necessary, despite his misgivings about the Danaids.[579] Less ardent supporters might have excused Pelasgus' actions on the basis that he is simply acting in the Argives' best interest, and in doing so reveals that he is a real leader, not a demagogue. Those with oligarchic leanings may even have respected Pelasgus for distrusting his people to choose what is in their best interest.[580]

Although the fact that Pelasgus intends to manipulate the Argives might have affected different spectators in different ways, the particular strategy he employs would have had a much more specific effect on the evaluation of matters at hand. Pelasgus'

[579] See Hesk 2000 for a discussion of the fear in late fifth-century Athens of rhetoric's power to deceive in political venues.

[580] Sommerstein 1997: 76-7 argues that Pelasgus' manipulation of the Argives is meant to evoke Cimon's appeal to the Athenians in response to Sparta's plea for help against the Messenians, which, though successful, ends in disgrace for when the Spartans send the Athenians home. The date of these events (*c.* 462) is close enough to the performance of the play (463—Sommerstein suggests lowering it 461) to make it tempting to consider the possibility that Aeschylus is responding to them. Sommerstein argues that "aspects of its action were designed to recall recent events involving Kimon and Athenian-Spartan relations and to strengthen feeling against him ahead of the ostracism vote" which came as a result of his role in the matter (78). See also Forrest 1960: 240. If the dates line up, and if in fact spectators pick up on the parallels, they will may have been inclined to disapprove of Pelasgus' actions and to expect matters to turn out very badly for the Argives. It seems unlikely, however, that they would expect the events of the play to conform exactly to the events of history, regardless of the parallels, and may therefore have reserved judgment.

plan affords them the play's second behind-the-scenes look into the process of eliciting sympathy. As in the case of Danaus' advice to his daughters (191-203), this plan may have alerted the audience to the artificial nature of appeals to sympathy and indirectly raised doubts about the Danaids' position. And yet, Pelasgus' planned manipulation of the Argives speaks more directly to the experience of Aeschylus' spectators. His strategy may have seemed familiar because it almost exactly parallels the way in which the Danaids presented themselves to Pelasgus, and to the audience, in the first half of the play. The Danaids also attempted to appeal more to their audience's emotions than to the facts of their case. They identified themselves as suppliants and emphasized the fear and desperation associated with suppliants so that their audience would "bear goodwill to those who are the weaker" (483-4; 489). They invited pity for themselves and attempted to make their audience hate the Aegyptids with frequent accusations of *hybris* (487-8). The fact that the spectators can recognize something of themselves in the Argives and their form of government reinforces this parallel. In this way, the enumeration of Pelasgus' plan functions as a wake-up call to spectators who have yet to recognize the nature of the Danaids' appeal. They see an audience very much like themselves being manipulated in a way that mirrors the approach of the Danaids through most of the play. It stands to reason, therefore, that the spectators have been the target of a strategy similar to the one Pelasgus will use on the Argives.

Thus, the manipulation of the Argives allows the play to proceed without revealing to the audience the facts of the Danaids' situation. The enumeration of the plan to manipulate the Argives leaves no doubt in the mind of the audience that this is the case. Yet rather than show the Danaids decisively in the wrong, this information merely

heightens suspense. Although an emotional appeal would be the only way to make the Danaids sympathetic to spectators if the Danaids are patently in the wrong, very few Greeks would consider pursuing even a valid case without making an emotional appeal (see above). At this point, the only thing about which spectators can be certain at this stage is that they, just like Pelasgus and the Argives, do not have the facts necessary to judge the Danaids accurately.

The play appears to draw attention to spectators' uncertainty with Danaus' ironic observations on the effect that the sight of Egyptians (such as himself and the Danaids) will have upon Argives.[581] He is worried about his welfare because:

> μορφῆς δ᾽ οὐχ ὁμόστολος φύσις·
> Νεῖλος γὰρ οὐχ ὁμοῖον ἰνάχωι γένος
> τρέφει. φύλαξαι μὴ θράσος τέκηι φόβον·
> καὶ δὴ φίλον τις ἔκταν᾽ ἀγνοίας ὕπο.
> (496-99)
>
> the nature of our form is not similar
> for the Nile nourishes a race dissimilar to the that of Inachus;
> be on guard that boldness not bring about fear:
> men have even killed kin out of ignorance.

This passage continues the ongoing trend in the play to obscure differences between the Danaids and their cousins. Danaus is afraid that, due to their lack of familiarity with Egyptian practices, the Argives may be frightened by boldness (θράσος) and perhaps even mistakenly kill their kin as a result. The Aegyptids are also "nourished by the Nile," and, like Danaus and his daughters, they are kin to the Argives through their connection to Io and Epaphos. Danaus fears should, then, apply to them as well and may offer a disturbing look forward to the Aegyptids' arrival in Argos if the Danaids have

[581] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 389-90 think it "unbelievable that Danaus (and apparently Peelasgus as well, cf. 500) should think the populace may fear a solitary stranger, and a suppliant at that."

misrepresented their situation. If so, the Argives may indeed misjudge the Aegyptids' actions and end up killing their kin "out of ignorance." The fact that Danaus' reference to accidentally killing one's kin may put spectators in mind of the deliberate murder of the Aegyptids by the Danaids would only heighten their fears about the Danaids' sincerity.[582]

VII Conclusion

With this scene, the Danaids' struggle to find a protector in Argos is effectively concluded (Gould 1973: 89, citing Schlesinger.).[583] Yet the issue of the Danaids' circumstances and intentions remains open. The Danaids make a case for themselves as innocent victims of their *hybristic* cousins. There are indications, however, that the Danaids are in the wrong, that the Aegyptids have a rightful claim upon them and that they reject the marriage on the basis of an unacceptable view of the relations between men and women. The Danaids may be pursuing a course set by their father, whether to save his life or to cripple his brother's forces, or their father may simply be accompanying them as they attempt to relive the experience of their ancestor, Io. As this scene comes to an end, it will be clear to spectators that, though they may favor one or the other explanation, they do not have the information necessary to properly evaluate the Danaids.[584] Should they admire the Argives and hope for their success because they

[582] On the application of Danaus' words to his daughters, cf. Murray 1958: 75 and Gantz 1978: 283.
[583] Pelasgus of course might still have trouble convincing the Argives.
[584] My treatment of the first half of the play might suggest that every spectator would constantly shift their view of the Danaids as each new piece of evidence is revealed. This obviously would not have been the case. Spectators would pick up on some pieces of evidence rather than others, and their hypotheses regarding the Danaids would be biased in one direction or another as a result. As has been illustrated by some studies of the play, it is possible to follow one strand of the Danaids' characterization, while ignoring or downplaying evidence that might contradict one's view of them. This is not only a valid way to read the

have come to the Danaids' rescue or should they pity them for having unwittingly aided a band of murderesses and endangered their city in the process?

play, but one that was no doubt common in practice. And yet the contradictory evidence is there, even if spectators only recognized it in retrospect. I would argue that there is enough contradictory evidence to suggest that, regardless of their suspicions, many spectators would, and were intended to, reserve final judgment regarding the Danaids until they learned more about them.

CHAPTER 4: THE DANAIDS IN THE *SUPPLIANTS*, PART II

I TRANSFORMATIONS AND HAPPY ENDINGS

For spectators who found no intrinsic link between the Danaids and the myth of Io, the song that follows Pelasgus' promises to assist Danaus and his daughters (524-99) will have little to say about the nature of the Danaids apart from the opening strophe, in which they reassert their accusations against the Aegytpids and perhaps offer evidence of their incipient penchant for violence. The ode's extensive treatment of Io's tale should confirm the impression of those who have previously recognized a link between the stories of Io and the Danaids, and it might have convinced other spectators that Io's story is in fact having an impact on the Danaids' actions in the present. Spectators who believed that the stories parallel one another are likely to have found in this ode find in this ode an indication that the Danaids' situation may turn out well for the Danaids despite evidence to the contrary.

I.1 ANGER AGAINST THE AEGYPTIDS OR SOMETHING MORE

After addressing Zeus with a series of lofty titles, the Danaids ask him: "ward off men's *hybris* as an object of extreme hatred" (ἄλευσον ἀνδρῶν ὕβριν εὖ στυγήσας) and cast into a dark lake "ruin that comes in the form of a black-benched ship" (τὰν μελανόζυγ' ἄταν, 528-30). Spectators sympathetic to the Danaids' position could have dismissed the Danaids' desire to see the Aegytpids dead as a product of their fear of the suitors, but it is in keeping with the increasingly violent nature of the Danaids as evidenced by the previous scene. And such a wish would certainly have reminded

audience members that, at least according to the myth, the Danaids themselves will fulfill this wish.[585]

The Danaids' reference to *hybris* in their prayer is also notably general, attributed here simply to "men" rather than to the Aegyptids in particular. The reference to black benches indicates the Aegyptids in their ships and might be thought to clarify the earlier reference (Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 31). But their desire to see the Aigyptids dead may simply be a specific instance of their general aversion to men, and their desire for Zeus to look kindly upon τὸ πρὸς γυναικῶν (531), "the matter from the women's perspective," may show that the Danaids are intentionally taking a broad, gender-based view of their situation.[586] Some spectators may have taken this as an indication of the Danaids' unacceptable rejection of all men and thus of marriage in general. Spectators may have been reassured as to the Danaids' sincerity, if nothing else, by their delivering these denunciations in the context of a prayer to Zeus, as was the case in their first song.

I.2 The Support of Zeus

The rest of the song is devoted to reminding Zeus of the story of Io, his lover and the mother of his son, Epaphos, the ancestor through whom the Danaids claim their relation to Zeus (531-6). Spectators may have viewed this telling of Io's story as another extended example of *hypomnesis* (cf. Belfiore 2000: 45-6 and the discussion above), a necessary step in the Danaids' prayer for Zeus's help. Spectators may also have viewed

[585] Cf. Gantz 1978: 283, who suggests that the purple pool (λίμναι πορφυρειδεῖ) to which the Danaids refer in fact describes "the dark red pool of blood into which the Danaids will cast [the Aegyptids]. See also Fisher 1992: 268.
[586] Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 31 asserts that πρὸς γυναικῶν "is likewise specified by the subsequent reference to Io…." This seems to miss the point, ignoring its significance in the present context.

the song as an implicit argument directed at them that Zeus is already behind them, perhaps as a result of his influence upon Pelasgus in the previous scene (cf. 478-9). The Danaids repeatedly refer to their descent from Io and invoke Zeus as their forefather (cf. 527, 532-3, 539, 588-9, 592-3). They conclude their account of Io's wanderings, which culminates in Zeus's intervention on her behalf and the birth of Epaphos, with the question, "which of the gods would I reasonably call upon because of more favorable deeds?" (τίν' ἄν θεῶν ἐνδικωτέροισιν κικλοίμαν εὐλόγως ἐπ' ἔργοις, 590-1). Thus, after a series of negative representations, the Danaids claim the support of the most powerful god in the pantheon. The move hearkens back to the Danaids' earlier odes. The possibility that Zeus remains on their side might suggest that their cause is just, in spite of the questionable means they have used to achieve it and their suspicion-inducing desire for secrecy.[587] In this way the reassertion of Zeus's approval may have restored confidence in audience members who have held out hope for the Danaids and led others in the audience to question their own doubts regarding the girls.

And yet, the Danaids' "proof" of Zeus's support has wider implications. It is true that the experiences of Io that the Danaids recount, that is, being chased from their homeland, coming to a foreign land, and dealing with a suitor, parallel their own experiences. But as an elaborate proof of descent from Zeus and as the basis for their claim to his goodwill, Io's story applies equally well to the Aegytpids. They too belong to the line that passes down from Zeus and Io through Epaphos, and one can imagine them delivering a song to Zeus similar to the Danaids', in which they claim his support

[587] It is worth noting that elsewhere Zeus's support is occasionally given to seemingly unjust causes on the basis of kinship. Cf. Bacchylides 17 in which Zeus bestows honor on Minos, granting proof in the form of lightning bolt that Minos is his son, despite the fact that Minos' motives are hardly honorable

on the basis of kinship and as fellow suitors pursuing their brides. Spectators who noted this might question the entire basis of the Danaids' argument.

I.3 Parallel Lives

The Danaids' relationship to Io runs deeper than bloodlines, however. This ode offers a firmer basis for spectators inclined to believe that the Danaids' experiences map onto Io's, in which Io's story is not simply an aside but offers both an explanation of the Danaids' behavior, and perhaps an indication as to what will happen next. In the opening song, the audience was left to draw its own conclusions from parallels between Io's and the Danaids' stories. Here, two statements by the Danaids' statements suggest that Io may be a model for their behavior. The Danaids tell Zeus, "renew our beloved ancestress's tale of kindness" (φιλίας προγόνου γυναικὸς νέωσον εὔφρον' αἶνον, 533-4).[588] νέωσον is often construed as something akin to "recall" but has a stronger force, as Johansen and Whittle observe (1980: 418): the Danaids are asking Zeus to renew the kindnesses he once bestowed upon Io: "you came to Io's rescue; now come to ours." Yet spectators may have understood the Danaids' to be asking Zeus to recreate Io's experiences for them in a way that would include, but not be limited to, Zeus's kindly intervention at its conclusion. This interpretation may find confirmation when the Danaids observe, shortly thereafter and before they begin their account of Io's wanderings), "I have made my way to the ancient path [of Io]" (παλαιὸν δ' εἰς ἴχνος μετέσταν, 538). The Danaids have literally come to the home from which Io fled all

[588] See Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 417-8 for this rendering of the adjective εὔφρονα.

those years ago (539-40), but they may be seen to be walking Io's path in a broader sense.

Thus, spectators may have been alert to the way in which this song bears on the present suffering of the Danaids and on its resolution. We have already seen that there is evidence that the play is drawing a connection between Hera, who represents marriage and sent the gadfly to torment Io, and the Aegyptids, who both carry the banner of marriage and torment the Danaids. If Hera is indeed seen as the representative of marriage and the parallel holds in this song, her behavior suggests that marriage may not be a perfect institution and that there may be reason to reject it under certain circumstances. The Danaids' account of Io's suffering clearly casts Hera in an unsympathetic role: she not only torments Io, an innocent victim (cf. 541-2, 556-7, 562-4), but also stands in opposition to Zeus, who must put a stop to her persecution (586-7).[589] Spectators might have seen this as a tacit endorsement of the Danaids, who themselves claim Zeus's support in their opposition to marriage.[590]

Yet Io's story would do little to justify a general aversion to men and marriage. Io is no Amazon. She comes into opposition to Hera unwittingly as a result of Zeus's actions. Despite her trouble with the goddess of marriage, she will, again with Zeus's help, give birth to a child and become the ancestor of a distinguished line. Zeus, for his part, is motivated by libido rather than ideology; Io's story suggests that the Danaids will find little support from him in rejecting all sex and childbirth, especially if their rejection

[589] In this context the passing reference to Typho (560) may be no coincidence. According to Hesiod, Earth gives birth to him as a challenge to Zeus's rule (*Th.* 820ff.). Yet in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, he is the parthenogenic offspring of Hera, created in retaliation for the birth of Athena (306-55).

[590] The effect would be somewhat limited were the audience to suppose that the depiction of Hera in this version of the myth does not lend objective support for their behavior but is itself a function of the Danaids' view of marriage. Cf. Murray 1958· 52, though his observation stems from his overdependence on the account of Io in the *Prometheus Vinctus* (54).

extends to divine suitors.[591] But if spectators understand Io's story as a kind of allegory for the rejection of an oppressive form of marriage in favor of one that is worthy and distinguished, they might see in it support for a specific rejection of the Aegyptids on the part of the Danaids (such that they are holding out for a better offer).

I. 4 A HAPPY ENDING?

Unlike earlier versions of Io's story presented in the *Suppliants*, this account emphasizes its happy conclusion. If viewed as precedent for the Danaids, it looks forward to their own happy ending. Although it treats her forced march in Asia and the madness inflicted upon her by Hera, the Danaids' tale concludes with Zeus easing Io's suffering (571-3), putting a stop to Hera's maladies (586-7) and ending Io's wandering (575-8), presumably restoring Io's human form (cf. Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 462), and impregnating her with Epaphos, a "blameless child" (580-1). The nature of Zeus in the story may also be thought to look forward to an ideal suitor for the Danaids. He clearly offers a stark contrast to the Aegyptids (Murray 1958: 36, Conacher 1996: 93). He is more powerful than anyone or anything (595-99), but his strength, unlike the Aegyptids', is ἀπημάντωι, "painless," and he will use it to offer support (ἔρμα) to Io. Despite his vast power, his approach is not terrifying, but felt like "divine breaths."

Spectators may simply have viewed the story's positive turn as wishful thinking on the part of the Danaids rather than as a reliable predictor of their future. Yet, to the degree that they believe that Io's and the Danaids' fates are intertwined, this song might lead spectators to predict that the Danaids will find better unions than the ones that the

[591] According to Caldwell 1974 this is not the case: the Danaids reject men *because* of their "oedipal attachment" to Zeus, their "father-substitute."

Aegyptids propose.[592] If the stories parallel one another in a slightly less direct way, spectators might have been satisfied that the Danaids' story will at least reflect Io's movement from suffering to salvation.

Even spectators who did not recognize a direct connection between Io and the Danaids may have found suggestive the Danaids' emphasis at this particular point in the play on a story whose outcome belies its troublesome beginnings. Given the Danaids' questionable reputation in myth and aggressive behavior in the previous scene, spectators could have found the description of Io's arrival in Egypt immediately before Zeus comes to her aid is especially interesting. The Egyptians are initially filled with fear and wonder when they see Io's (incredibly) foreign appearance (565-70)—she is half human, half cow—but appear to have warmed to her after Zeus intervenes, Epaphos is born, and the whole land is singing Epaphos' praises (582-5). The locals misinterpret Io's strange appearance at first but come to welcome her and her family when they learn her story. In this way the critical shift in Io's story from negative to positive is captured in the image of the initially cold reception of a foreigner warming as her circumstances become clear. Though not nearly as strange in appearance as Io, the Danaids have likewise inspired fear and suspicion in their Argive audience and probably in their external Athenian audience as well. Io's transformation, then, offers a model for a similar revelation regarding the Danaids; despite the problematic first impression that the Danaids have made on their audience, Io's story suggests that they too might come to be accepted when their true circumstances come to light. Io is saved; the Danaids may be redeemed.

[592] Murray 1958: 61-3 argues that only Hypermestra will fulfill the promise of these verses in her union with Lynceus. Others might point to stories in which the Danaids are married off in a footrace (cf. the version of their story in Pindar *N*.9.112-6).

Viewed more objectively, the lesson of a foreigner who is initially misjudged but eventually embraced by a local community can also be applied to the Aegyptids. Again, the story of Io may cut both ways for the Danaids: their use of the Io myth initially appears to support their rejection of the Aegyptids and to point to a happy and justifiable conclusion to their struggle. But the story may in fact introduce more questions regarding the outcome of their story.

II Duped Democracy, Developing Tyranny

The report of Pelasgus' successful attempt to persuade the Argives to take in the Danaids further emphasizes the resemblance between Argives and Athenians. It underlines the fact that Aeschylus' spectators are watching an audience very much like themselves being manipulated in a way that might seem familiar from Athenian politics. As if this were not enough, the matter under issue, the nature of the Danaids and their cause, is the same one that spectators themselves have been wrestling with through much of the play.[593] The positive outcome may also have disturbing implications. Danaus and the Danaids are accepted into the city as resident aliens, but the particular terms of Argos' decision may point forward to worrisome developments in Argos.

[593] Sommerstein 1997: 76-7 argues that this situation is intended to evoke Perikleidas' attempt to gain help from the Athenians with the help of Cimon. supplication reference to an actual event in history, namely Argos' acceptance of Themistocles. Although the process may be reminiscent of other recent and not so recent acts of supplication in Athens and elsewhere (cf. Forrest 1960, who argues that the supplication is reminiscent Themistocles' appeal to democratic Argos in 470/69), I argue that the effect is much more closely related to the audience's appreciation of the action.

II.1 MANIPULATING A DEMOCRACY

This scene picks up on the idea in the last scene that Danaus and the Danaids, with the help of Pelasgus, are deceiving an audience very similar to the audience that was attending the performance of the *Suppliants*. The Danaids quickly establish that Argos is a kind of proto-democracy with their reference to the δήμου κρατοῦσα χεὶρ (604), which literally translated refers to "the ruling hand of the people," but clearly alludes to *demokratia*, that is, power in the hands of the people (Sommerstein 1997: 75, Turner 2001: 42). Danaus describes a political process that, with the manner in which the Argives vote, the terms of the Argives' decree, and the punishment faced by those who contradict it (ἄτιμια), sounds as if it might have come from the Athenian assembly (Bakewell 1997: 210, Sommerstein 1997: 76, Turner 2001: 42).[594] And Pelasgus' dealings with his people would also be familiar to those accustomed to the Assembly.

Furthermore, Danaus makes no secret of Pelasgus' manipulation of the Argives. Pelasgus persuades the people (615, cf. 623) but relies on rhetorical devices, "twistings that lead the people" (δημηγόρους στροφὰς, 623), to do so (Sommerstein 1997: 76).[595] He is said to have warned the Argives about the wrath of Zeus in matters of supplication (616) and the threat of pollution (618-20), but no mention is made of the threat of "war which, to judge by Pelasgos' tactics, they never would have accepted if the issue had been put to them honestly" (Sommerstein 1997: 75-6; cf. Podlecki 1986).

[594] The form may be common to decrees of the period in general. See Johansen-Whittle II (1980), 496.
[595] Cf. Podlecki 1986: 85: Pelasgus "is not so much the abosute ruler he had made himself out to be in his opening speech, but something like a *demagogos* is the technical sense, a political leader who as to put his ideas across by compellingly persuasive rhetoric."

II.2 BURGEONING TYRANY?

Though more or less conventional in form, the terms upon which Argos grants protection to Danaus and his daughters speak directly to fears that Danaus is working behind the scenes and that he will establish himself as a tyrant at Argos:

> ἡμᾶς μετοικεῖν τῆσδε γῆς ἐλευθέρους
> κἀρρυσιάστους ξύν τ᾽ ἀσυλίαι βροτῶν
> καὶ μήτ᾽ ἐνοίκων μήτ᾽ ἐπηλύδων τινὰ
> ἄγειν᾽ ἐὰν δὲ προστιθῆι τὸ καρτερόν,
> τὸν μὴ βοητήσαντα τῶνδε γαμόρων
> ἄτιμον εἶναι ξὺν φυγῆι δημηλάτωι.
>
> (609-614)
>
> that we be free inhabitants of this land,
> not to be seized and inviolable
> and that no inhabitant nor stranger
> lead us off; but if force is applied,
> landowners who do not come to our aid
> will lose their rights and face publicly decreed exile.

Taking his cue from the verb μετοικεῖν, Bakewell argues that this decree would lead the audience to believe that Danaus and his daughters have essentially become metics of Argos (1997: 212-3).[596] Like metics in Athens, the Danaids will "retain control of themselves and their property, and may not be seized by another under claim of ownership or outstanding obligation….Moreover, as metics the Danaids are entitled to the help of the Argives in defending themselves and their property" (Bakewell 1997: 212-3).[597] The fact that Argos would make the Danaids metics or their equivalent (rather than, say, citizens) is not particularly surprising nor particularly interesting in itself.

[596] Johansen-Whittle II 1980: 496-7 observes that the verb μετοικεῖν "does not occur in inscriptions until c. 450, and not in Attic inscriptions before the Hellenistic age, and it is not commonly used of 'being a metic' in the Athenian sense of the word until the 4th cent." Given the obvious resemblance between the verb and the term commonly used in Athens, the fact that the verb was not in official use would not prevent an audience from appreciating the reference.

[597] Bakewell offers in support of his argument the fact that Danaus and the Danaids' status as *metics*, and in particular the inability of *metics* to possess property in Athens, helps explain Pelasgus' problematic reference to housing at the end of the play (1009-11).

Viewed in the context of the Aegyptid threat, the means through which Argos intends to enforce the Danaids' status also makes sense. Not only will the Danaids be protected against violence from those bound by the decree (i.e., the Argives), but the Argives themselves will be forced to come to their aid (i.e., against the Aigyptids) (611-2).

Yet when viewed in light of the Danaids' secrecy, traditional accounts of their wedding night, and intimations of tyrannical aspirations on the part of Danaus, the decree has disturbing implications. Even if Danaus does something horrible, such as commanding his daughters to murder the Aegyptids under false pretenses, the decree means that the Argives cannot oppose Danaus or his daughters and that they must in fact come to their aid or risk losing their citizenship and going into exile. This does not bode well for the future of the city.

Despite potential fears regarding the Danaids and Pelasgus' blatant manipulation of the Argives in this scene, however, the play leaves open the possibility that the Danaids are in the right. In closing his report, Danaus observes that Pelasgus persuaded the Argives that Ζεὺς δ' ἐπέκρανεν τέλος (624), "but Zeus brought it to fulfillment." If he is thought to be right, one must put aside any doubts regarding the Danaids and conclude that Pelasgus is fully justified in using the techniques he does to bring his people in line with Zeus's will.

III Ode to Argos

On the surface, the Danaids' song is a conventional prayer of thanks to the Argives (cf. 631-2, 656-8), and may simply have been understood as such by many in the audience (cf. Burian 2007: 207, Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 4). Yet the prayer speaks to

the threat of impending war between the Argives and the Aegyptids and appears to allude to the murder of the Aegyptids at the hands of the Danaids. With its seemingly contradictory emphasis on the Danaids' struggle as women against men on the one hand and their praise of fertility on the other, the song also raises the stakes on the developing issue of the Danaids' sexuality.

III.1 A CONTINGENT PRAYER?

The Danaids pray that Argos remain unharmed from threats such as sickness and war and that she continue to flourish with abundant resources and fertility. They address the role of the gods and predictably emphasize the role of their patron, Zeus. They congratulate the Argives on choosing to side, correctly, with Zeus who watches over strangers (cf. 641-2, 646-7, 652-5). At the same time, the references to Zeus may not be be entirely benevolent.[598] After all, the Argives have yet to fulfill their promise to the Danaids, and the Danaids' words may, then, contain an implicit threat. They observe that Zeus's vengeance is a powerful force (647-50) and pray that the city be well-governed as long as they continue to revere Zeus (670-3).

III.2 A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE?

Many have noted that this ode may also contain "ironic foreshadowing" (Turner 2001: 36; cf. Murray 1958: 80). This aspect is most obvious in the references to war that pervade the ode (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 3). The Danaids' prayer begins with the

[598] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 3 offers a more positive evaluation of Zeus's role in the ode; they argues on the contrary that "the ode is built round an antithesis between Zeus…who is viewed as protector both of suppliants and strangers…and of the Argive community, and Ares…who is viewed as his destructive opponent and whose appearance has been prepared for by the recurrent motif of πόλεμος in 333-479."

hope that Ares never destroy the city because Argos took the Danaids in (632-42) despite Pelasgus' having made it clear that this is exactly what will happen if Argos takes in the Danaids (cf. 342). Prayers against war may have been exactly what Argos needed, but knowing that the Danaids have brought war upon the Argives, spectators may have taken it with a grain of salt when they pray that Argive blood not be shed (661-2),[599] that the bloom of Argos' youth not be plucked (663-4), and that "some man-killing ruin" (τις ἀνδροκμὴς λοιγὸς) not cleave the city (678). The Danaids' final reference to war shows the greatest disconnect between the Danaids' prayers for Argos and their specific circumstances. It is most notable for offering the first hint in the *Suppliants* that the Aegyptids may not be exactly as the Danaids have described them:

> ξένοισί τ' εὐξυμβόλους
> πρὶν ἐξοπλίζειν Ἄρη,
> δίκας ἄτερ πημάτων διδοῖεν;
> (701-3)
> to strangers, let them grant
> transparent legal proceedings without pain
> before preparing for war.

This could certainly apply broadly to the Danaids, but it would be hard for most spectators not to think also about the Aegyptids at the mention of ξένοι, "strangers," against whom the Argives might wage war; if they are indeed taken to be the referent of ξένοις, this prayer would effectively warn Argos to think very hard before embarking on war against the Aegyptids without first granting them a fair hearing (i.e. fail to grant them δίκας). The idea of granting justice to strangers is of course nothing new; it is one of the

[599] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 30 points out that the Danaids' phrase αἱματίσαι πέδον γᾶς clear looks back to αἱμάσαι πέδον at line 477, where Pelasgus is thinking about the war that the will come from accepting the Danaids.

defining tenets of Greek ethics.[600] The fact that the Danaids endorse this sentiment in the abstract, presumably because they only see how it applies to them, would make its implications with regard to the Aegyptids all the more damning for the Danaids' cause.

For some spectators, the suspicion that the Danaids would eventually pollute Argos by murdering the Aegyptids within its walls would prevent them from taking seriously any of the Danaids' prayers for Argos. They may also have been particularly attuned to possible references to the murder in the ode.[601] The Danaids pray that Ares not shear the bloom of youth and describe him as the "bedmate of Aphrodite" (665). Though canonical, the image of Ares in bed with Aphrodite, of violence erupting from a love-making bed, aptly describes the murder of the Aegyptids on their wedding night (Gantz 1978: 285, Conacher 1996: 94). Spectators may also have seen in the ode's plague that empties the city of men (λοιμὸς ἀνδρῶν τάνδε πόλιν κενώσαι, 659) and the aforementioned ἄνδροκμὴς λοιγὸς, "man-killing slaughter," allusions to the Danaids, a threat to the (future) male inhabitants that is second only to war (Murray 1958: 80, Gantz 1978: 284-5, Turner 2001: 36). Even the Danaids' praise of Zeus *Xenios* may have rankled, given that, if the Danaids' story accords with mythical precedent, the Aegyptids may very well be the Argives' ξένοι in the sense of "guests" at the time when the Danaids kill them so that their murder will be a violation of the customs and laws governing *xenia* (Turner 2001: 37-8).

[600] This is one of the primary themes of the *Odyssey*. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 62 cite a similar expression in at Hes. *Op.* 225-7.
[601] See Murray 1958: 80, Turner 2001: 36-7, Conacher 1996: 94, and Gantz 1980: 285 on references to the murder in this song.

III.3 HONOR THY PARENT

The ode closes by emphasizing the importance of honoring one's parents (707). The lines appear to be weakly motivated by a reference by the Danaids to worshipping the gods in the way established by their forefathers,[602] and, as Johansen and Whittle point out, "may contain a veiled 'ironical allusion to the obedience paid to their father by the Danaids on a memorable later occasion" (III 1980: 68). Johansen and Whittle refer here to the account of the myth in which the Danaids murder the Aegyptids in accordance with their father's orders, and this may account for the presence of this sentiment, which is otherwise hard to account for. Yet the stress that the Danaids place upon honoring their parents may also be taken as evidence that they are in fact motivated by a desire to save their father from murder at the hands of a son-in-law, as told in the oracle. The prescription to honor parents may have been a nod to those in the audience who were already familiar with the role of the oracle in the Danaid's story, but the prominence accorded it by its lack of context and its placement at the end of the song, suggest that it is intended as preparation for a revelation in the Danaids' story that few if any in Aeschylus' audience would have known (cf. Sicherl 1986: 107-8 and the discussion above). If this is the case, it is ironic that a reference to the Danaids' noble motive for fleeing and eventually killing the Aegyptids is concealed in what appears to be a reference to the sinister nature of the Aegyptids' murder.

[602] See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 65-68 for a discussion of the function of these lines in their context.

III.4 MEN AND MARRIAGE: YES OR NO

Finally, the ode offers contradictory evidence regarding the Danaids' view of men and marriage. Early in the song the Danaids cast their flight from the Aegyptids as a struggle of women against men: they praise the Argives because they did not place their vote μετ' ἀρσένων, "with men," and thereby dishonoring the ἔριν γυναικῶν, the "quarrel of women" (643-5) (cf. Murray 1958: 29-30). Although there is little doubt that they are referring to the Aegyptids and themselves, this tendency to place themselves in opposition to men in general seems to support a reading in which they reject all men as the enemy. Yet shortly thereafter the ode finds the Danaids espousing the virtues of fertility and traditional roles for women, a move that seems out of keeping with an ideologically motivated antipathy to men and to sexual union.[603] They pray for the fertility of the crops (688-90, 674-5?) and for the livestock (691).[604] The Danaids' prayer that Artemis watch over women's childbirth (676-7) offers the greatest argument against their purported rejection of marriage in all forms. This reference to Artemis seems to contradict explicitly the implication of earlier invocations of the goddess in which the Danaids addressed her as a virgin and prayed to remain virgins themselves (cf. 143, 149, 153). One might add that in previous instances where the Danaids refer to women in their corporate identity, they do so only to distinguish them from men. Here they refer to

[603] Conacher 1996: 101 simply notes that "There is also a hint of a paradox (which may be resolved later in the trilogy) in the Danaids' prayer for Argive fertility coupled with their own somewhat frenzied virginity."
[604] Lines 674-5 may refer to the fertility of people, specifically of leaders (ἐφόρους), or again to the fertility of crops (φόρους) if one accepts Erfurdt's emendation with Hermann, Wecklein, Tucker, Headlam, Murray, Rose, and Page. See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 40, who supports the former reading. Belfiore 1997: 61 notes the similarities between this section of the song and between Aphrodite's observations regarding fertility in Radt fr. 44.

γυναῖκες in the context of the most conventional activity for women and the one that binds them most closely to men.

IV The Egyptians are Coming

The interaction between Danaus and the Danaids, prompted by Danaus' sighting of the Aegyptids' ships, casts the Danaids in a sympathetic light by placing them in opposition to the entirely unsympathetic Aegyptids. The Danaids are helpless and stricken with fear; they demonstrate their piety and maintain their claim to justice. Their account of the Aegyptids, by contrast, emphasizes the Aegytpids' mindless savagery and impiety. Despite having only a distant claim to Greek identity and having been made residents of Argos only moments ago, Danaus and his daughters also dwell on the Aegyptids' barbarity and lay the groundwork for seeing Greco-Barbarian overtones in the impending struggle between the Aegyptids and the Argives.

IV.1 Helpless Danaids and Horrible Aegyptids

Previous scenes hinted at a level of aggression, authority, and power in the Danaids that was out of keeping with the initial picture of them as frightened virgins. In this scene they are very much scared little girls. Their fear and helplessness are apparent throughout the scene. Danaus can predict how they will respond to the arrival of the Aegyptids. He tells them not to be afraid both before and after telling them the news (711, 729), feels the need to calm them down (724-5), and attempts to reassure them (726, 740). The Danaids themselves make no secret of their fear (cf. 734, 736-8). They appear helpless. The Danaids beg Danaus not to leave them alone and observe that "a

woman left alone is nothing; there is no war in her" (γυνὴ μονωθεῖσ' οὐδέν; οὐκ ἔνεστ' Ἄρης, 749). Danaus seems to acknowledge this with his promise to bring back help (726). He tells his daughters that, in his absence, they must remember the gods in the face of the Aegyptids (725).

Whereas the Danaids are apprehensive, fearful, and pious victims, the Aegyptids are aggressive, savage, and impious persecutors. According to the Danaids, the Aegyptids are destructive (ἐξῶλες), mad with lust (μάργον; cf. μεμαργωμένοι at 758), and cannot get their fill of battle (741-2). They are arrogant (περίφρονες) and bent on outright destruction (οὐλόφρονες) and duplicity (δολομήτιδες) (750-1). Danaus and his daughters repeatedly come back to the Aegyptids' lack of respect for the gods. They have no concern for what is holy (cf. 751: δυσάγοις φρεσίν[605]), including the altars of the gods (751-2). They will spare the Danaids for fear of the gods (755-6, cf. 757). The Aegyptids' savagery and lack of concern for the gods borders on the inhuman: the Agyptids are ravens in their lack of concern for altars (751-2),[606] dogs in their impudence (κυνοθρασεῖς), and they have the temperament of beasts (762-3).[607] The insistence upon the Aegyptids' negative qualities may not simply be byproducts of Danaus and the Danaids' distaste for the Aegyptids. Danaus appears confident that the Aegyptids' impiety will result in their downfall. He observes that mortals who dishonor the gods

[605] See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 105 who argues that this term speaks more to the Aegytpids' willingness to defile altars than to the fact that they are "unchaste" as the LSJ suggests.
[606] See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 106 for the tradition of ravens' stealing sacrifices from altars.
[607] See Hall 1989: 126 for the "bestiality" of barbarians. The effect of comparing the Aegyptids to animals would be only slightly undercut by Danaus' saying regarding wolves and dogs. Danaus may be suggesting that the Argives' traditional identification with wolves trumps the Aegyptids' passing resemblance to dogs. If this is the case, the move resembles that of Eteocles in the Shield scene.

will pay the penalty (732-3) and seems optimistic about their prospects if the Aegyptids are hated both by his daughters *and* by the gods (753-4).

IV.2 Greeks versus Barbarians?

The comparison of the Aegyptids to animals emphasizes their "otherness," but the characteristics that the Danaids attribute to Aegyptids, particularly extreme violence and unbridled passion, are in keeping with stereotypical depictions of barbarians (cf. Hall 1989: 125-6). This sense of the Aegyptids' otherness is underlined by the passage's references to the Aegyptids' foreign appearance. Danaus observes the contrast between the Aegyptids' black limbs and their white garments (719-20). The Danaids describe the μελάγχιμος στρατός, "black host," of the Aegyptids (745).

As inhabitants of Egypt, the sons of Aegyptus would be considered barbarians by a Greek audience,[608] and it would be easy for audiences to view the impending fight between the Aegyptids and the Argives as a struggle of barbarians against Greeks (cf. Turner 2001: 42-3). Given the parallels between Argos and democratic Athens, and given that these Argives face an invasion by a foreign force, it is likely that many in the audience would have been reminded of their own relatively recent experience with foreign invaders in the Persian Wars (Turner 2001: 46).[609] It also seems safe to suppose that, to the degree that they resemble those invaders on the eve of invasion, the Aegyptids would be utterly unsympathetic to an audience of Athenians. Of course we cannot say

[608] The fact that they speak Greek does not prevent them from being considered barbarians.
[609] Some of the parallels are obvious. Barbarian invaders induce fear in a seemingly unprepared populace. The Aegyptids' impiety and disdain for the gods and their altars may be taken to be a reference to the Persians' defiling of Athens' temples during the wars. It is difficult to say how the fact that the Argives sided with the Persians in the actual war would have affected how the audience perceived the parallel being drawn between the Argives and them.

with any certainty how the average Athenian felt about Persians and members of the Persian empire close to twenty years after Athenian homes and temples were destroyed and with other military encounters in much more recent memory (cf. Holladay 1978: 177, Miller 1997: 1). One imagines that some would be quicker than others to take a hostile position against anyone who even remotely resembled their enemies in the Persian Wars.

Many spectators, however, might have been skeptical of the parallels between Athens' struggle against the Persians and Argos' struggle against the Aegyptids, regardless of their opinion of Persia and Persians. Most notably, the people who are damning the Aegyptids for being "barbaric," and who are in fact the cause of war are themselves barbarians. Despite their claim to Argive heritage (which they would share with the Aegyptids), their recent acceptance as residents of Argos, and apparent identification with the Argives (cf. 740, 746-7), Danaus and his daughters are as Egyptian as the Aegyptids in appearance and homeland, if not in behavior (Turner 2001: 44). The Danaids acknowledge as much, and both Pelasgus and the Danaids have remarked directly on the Danaids' foreign appearance. No doubt their costumes would have insured that no one in the audience could forget it.[610] That the Danaids appear to have embraced Greek culture may have reassured some spectators. They are even seeking freedom, that great rallying cry of the Greeks in their struggle against the Persians. Nevertheless, others may have been hesitant to consider the dispute between the Argives

[610] The beginning of the following ode nevertheless seems to draw the audience's attention to the color of the Danaids' skin, perhaps in an attempt to remind audience members that the Danaids are Egyptian. The song plays with references to the Danaids' skin. They wish that they were black (μέλας γενοίμαν, 779) then clarify that they wish they were black smoke (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 127 notes that "black" is "not in itself a surprising description of smoke, though rarely attested"). Later they appear to refer to their "dark skin" (κελαινόχρως) though the adjective is later revealed to describe heart (785).

and the Aegyptids as a straightforward matter of Greek versus Barbarian, and thus been slower to forget any potential problems with the Danaids in favor of jingoism.

IV.3 A MOMENT'S DOUBT

Despite the evidence in their favor, three simple lines, almost throwaways, would make it extremely difficult for those familiar with the Danaid myth to believe that the Danaids are as helpless as they appear. Before Danaus leaves for help, he tells his daughters that if he is slow in returning, they should never forget their ἀλκή, their "defense" or "power" (730). The deictic τῆσδε, "this defense," suggests that Danaus is referring to something in the vicinity. Johansen and Whittle argue that it is "the protection afforded by the altar and its appurtenances" (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 90). Yet the Danaids are no longer at the altar (cf. 508), and it seems clear that it would not stop the Aegyptids if they were (cf. 751-2).[611] Spectators left to consider what kind of strength the Danaids have to rely on when left alone with the Aegyptids may have been immediately reminded of their wedding night, when they manage quite well by themselves. In a similar vein, spectators may have seen the irony of the claim, which, on the surface, appears unproblematic, that a woman left alone is nothing because she has no war in her. Again, those familiar with the myth might beg to differ (cf. Gantz 1978: 285, Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 104). Finally, spectators may have been reminded of the Danaids' secrecy and alerted to the possibility of ulterior motives when the Danaids describe the warlike nature of the Aegyptids and then remark to their father that they are speaking to "one who knows" (λέγω πρὸς εἰδότα, 742). The suggestion that Danaus

[611] Nevertheless the identification of the ἀλκή with the altar seems to be supported by line 832.

has a troubled past with the Aegyptids apart from the matter of their rejected suit might be thought to have repercussions on the Danaids' behavior in the present.

V A Return to Sincere Suicide

Left alone by their father, the Danaids sing a song that includes accusations against the Aegyptids. But the ode is consumed by their desire to escape the present circumstances, even if it means death. This song continues to portray the Danaids as victims and reinvests with meaning the hollow threat to commit suicide from their encounter with Pelasgus.

The Danaids' first mention of suicide in the play pointed to a stubborn, almost immature, determination to avoid marriage to the Aegyptids: if the Olympians will not come to their aid, they will appeal to Hades with a noose (154-61). At lines 455-61, spectators may have seen their threat to commit suicide as an empty gesture to persuade the Argives to do their will. This may also have cast suspicion on their first threat. The Danaids' references to suicide in this song recall these earlier instances; they not only refer to suicide, but also include the motif of suicide by hanging (787-8) and taking Hades as one's lord (791). Yet, in contrast to them, this reference to suicide demonstrates the sincerity of the Danaids' present desire for death. If the Danaid's ironic use of suicide to coerce Pelasgus represented the height of their powers, their willingness to embrace suicide in this scene reveals the true extent of their vulnerability. Suicide for the Danaids is no longer a mere threat nor a μηχανὴ καλή. It is portrayed as a realistic alternative to their present circumstances (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 37-8). The Danaids continue to express their fear at the arrival of the Aegyptids (cf. 785, 786). They will do

anything to escape them. They begin with the somewhat fanciful notion of becoming smoke or dust that disperses in the air (779-80; 781-3), but settle on the freedom from troubles that only death brings (802-3). They pray for death (804) and would hang themselves or leap from the highest cliff rather than marry the Aegyptids (787-88; 792-97). These references are distinguished from earlier references to suicide not only by the insistence with which they are presented but also by the fact that here for the first time the Danaids consider the consequences of the act: they claim that they will not refuse to become food for beasts (800-1).

A more detailed description of the Aegyptids' crimes both justifies and lends credibility to the Danaids' extreme response. The Danaids still profess an aversion to marrying the Aegyptids but specifically fear sex with them and violence at their hands. According to the Danaids, the Aegyptids pursue with the intent to seize them (819-21). They will do so forcefully (cf. βίαι, 798; βίαια, 812, 821) and "with clamorous lustfulness" (μάταισι πολυθρόοις, 820).[612] Earlier the Danaids voiced their aversion to the marriage bed in particular (804-5). Although the term *hybris* can refer to general physical or sexual abuse in particular (Fisher 1992: 494), the Danaids' reference to the Aegyptids' "*hybris* that is born in men" (ὕβρις ἀρσενογενής, 817-8) in this context may also have taken on sexual connotations and infused the Danaids' previous allusions to *hybris* with a similar meaning. This picture of the Aegyptids supports the reading that the Danaids are specifically opposed to the Aegyptians because of the Aegyptians' deviant notions regarding marriage and sexual relations. On the whole, this scene invites

[612] This is the translation of Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 169. Gantz 1978: 285-6 adds that the idea of a "cleaving marriage" (δαίκτορος γάμου, 798-9) suggests that the Danaids "wish to avoid sexual penetration by the Egyptians."

sympathy for the Danaids and supports their accusations against the Aegyptids. Unless the audience dismisses the Danaids' words as dissimulation, few will have been impervious to the Danaids' obvious fear and approved the Aegyptids' intention to force them into sexual submission.

Sceptics may, however, have noted potential problems with the ode. First, the Danaids' desire to kill themselves shows the degree to which the Danaids abhor the Aegyptids, but may also have suggested to spectators the lengths to which they might go in escaping them (cf. Conacher 1996: 96). This may have made the murder of the Aegyptids that much more plausible. Second, spectators who attributed to the Danaids an aversion to all marriage may have interpreted this ode as an exaggeration of their fear of sex, where the act of sex imposed by men upon women is βίη, "violent force," and an act of *hybris* that is particular to men (Lévy 1985: 37, 38). Lastly, the Danaids' own words seem to hint at their worrisome future. Spectators may have been troubled or perhpas amused by the Danaids' reference to a "cleaving marriage" (δαίκτορος γάμου) if they understand καρδίας to be dependent on δαίκτορος, rather than on βίαι as it is generally taken (cf. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 147). Read in this way, the Danaids will be thought to be referring to their marriage to the Aegyptids, which will literally be a "forceful cleaver of the heart" (Gantz 1978: 285). Spectators may also have noted that, though they appear to be thinking of themselves, the Danaids do not specify the party whom they pray will die before marriage (804-5) (Gantz 1978: 286). The Danaid's desire to "cut a path as a means of escape from marriage" (πόρον τέμνω γάμου λυτῆρα, 807) may also have created a more telling and graphic image than the Danaids may have intended (Gantz 1978: 286).

VI THEY'RE COMING TO TAKE ME AWAY

In the midst of their song, the Danaids are approached by a representative of the Aegyptids, most likely the Egyptian Herald, who joins them in alternating song.[613] Despite a very corrupt manuscript tradition, it is clear that the Herald is attempting to bully the Danaids into leaving the altar and boarding the Egyptian ships while the Danaids put up a strong resistance. The Danaids continue to make accusations of sexual impropriety and savagery. More surprisingly, the Herald does not dispute these accusations, but rather conforms to them, demonstrating impiety, brutality, and implying that the Aegyptids do in fact wish to make slaves of the Danaids.

VI.1 CLAIMS CONFIRMED

Up to this point in the *Suppliants*, the presentation of the Danaids' circumstances has been entirely one-sided (Caldwell 1974: 53). Secrecy, vagueness, deception and questionable behavior may have raised questions about the validity of the Danaids' version of events, but the audience has been able to do little more than accept or reject their account based on little or no hard evidence. In the past few scenes, the evidence, however subjective, was beginning to weigh against the Danaids. And the Danaids' accusations in this scene are very similar to what spectators have heard from them in the previous scenes. They expect violence (830) and charge the Egyptians with savagery

[613] The manuscripts do not identify a new speaker nor any change of speaker for these lines (836-871). Only the content of the song suggests that the Danaids do not sing every stanza despite the manuscripts' assertion that they do (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 172). The alternating lines have been attributed to chorus of Egyptian attendants and to the Herald who later speaks with the Danaids and Pelasgus. Garvie 1969: 193-4 and Taplin 1977: 217 favor a herald accompanied by silent companions. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 172-3 argues that the evidence against a chorus of Egyptians is not decisive. For my purposes it is important only that the lines are sung by a representative of the Aegyptids, not the Aegyptids themselves.

(833, 877), insolence (833), and *hybris* (845, 880-1). Their description plays on sexual overtones when they call the Herald a "ravisher" (μάρπτις, 826) and refer to his eagerness (μαιμᾶι, 895). They repeatedly compare the Egyptians to animals, in virtue of their brutality and lack of self-control (a spider, 887; a serpent 895; and a viper, 896).

Any temptation on the part of the audience to doubt the Danaids' charges is quashed by the fact that the Danaids can now be seen to be simply describing the Herald's behavior. In other plays, Aeschylus expands spectators' alignment from one character to another to show the inherent flaws in the first character's limited viewpoint. In this case, the Danaids' viewpoint seems to be confirmed in its entirety. Whereas before the Danaids may have been thought to exaggerate the negative qualities of the Aegyptians for their own benefit, in this scene the Herald's treatment of the Danaids corroborates their claims in this and earlier passages (cf. Fisher 1992: 267, Turner 2001: 40). The Herald repeatedly demonstrates his brutality with threats of force (cf. 863) that include the pulling of hair (839; 884), the tearing of clothes (903), pricking (839), and even bloody beheadings (840-1). The Herald's lack of concern for the Danaids' well-being and his willingness to issue them orders (e.g., 852; 861-2; 882-3) suggests that the Aegyptids intend something less than a respectful marriage for the Danaids. He implies that they will be the Aegyptids' slaves when he tells them that they need not fear being without masters; they will soon have many (906-7).[614] In addition to his lack of respect for the Danaids, the Herald shows disdain for the gods of Greece (872, 893-4) and without compunction orders the Danaids to leave the altar (852) (cf. Fisher 1992: 269).

[614] The fact that ἄναξ can be used both of slaves' masters and of husbands introduces ambiguity into this threat. With regard to slavery, see Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 30. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 184 also argues that the Herald's allusion to "pricking" is in fact a reference to the kind of tattooing used to mark slaves.

Only sexual indiscretion is lacking in the Herald's words, which is understandable if one grants that the Herald is meant to embody the brutality of the Aegyptids but could not believably express sexual interest in the wives-to-be of his masters. In short, with his barbaric threats and treatment of the Danaids, the Herald seems to live up to the impossibly negative depiction of the Aegyptids which the Danaids have nurtured throughout the play. And he is only the representative of the Aegyptids. How much worse they could be.

In light of the Herald's behavior, spectators might have considered the Danaids' desire to see him and the Aigyptids dead (827, 846, 867-71, cf. 880-1) is much more, if still not entirely, justified. The previous ode vindicated the Danaids' questionable treatment of suicide. This ode addresses the Danaids' prayers for the death of the Aigyptids. The Danaids' earlier prayers were spoken in relatively calm situations and might, therefore, have been thought to indicate homicidal intent by those who expect the Danaids to kill the Aigyptids through trickery. These prayers are clearly acts of desperation. The Danaids are terrified of the Aigyptids. Wishes for their own death have given way to incomprehensible cries (cf. 825, 831, 851, 866, 876, 885, 889, 898) and appeals for help (cf. 890-2 = 900-2, 905). If dying is no longer an option, only the death of the Aegyptids will spare them indignity at their hands. These prayers for the death of the Aegyptids and the Herald certainly do not argue against the Danaids' murdering the Aegyptids in a subsequent play, but, as positive evidence mounts against the Aegyptids, one can imagine circumstances in which the Danaids would be forced to defend themselves and in which the murder of men like these at least might be understandable.

VI.2 The Difference between Masters and Servants

And yet, the Herald's threats are just that, threats. At first glance, as I have suggested, the Herald, as a representative of the Aegyptids appears to corroborate everything the Danaids have said about them. Judging by their Herald, the Aegyptids seem to fit stereotypical depictions of barbarians with their cruelty, impiety and insatiable appetite. It is clear with whom the audience is intended to sympathize (Garvie 1969; 56-7, Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 173). Yet this picture of the Herald in all his barbarism may, however, be too perfect. The Herald threatens to humiliate the girls by tearing their hair and clothes and by poking at them, and one can imagine a very unpleasant man carrying out these threats.[615] But beheading? As Johansen and Whittle point out, the Aegyptids would hardly sanction execution as a means of getting the Danaids to their ships (III 1980: 184).[616] With this in mind, some audience members might have decided that the Herald intended his threats to motivate the Danaids and had no intention to carry them out. Even the Herald's professed willingness to ignore the Greek gods and drag the Danaids from the altar could be seen as a gambit to convince the girls to leave the altar of their own volition.[617] And, although the Herald is the closest thing that spectators have seen to decisive evidence regarding the nature of the Aegyptids, one must be careful to distinguish between the nature of the Herald and that of his masters. So, on the whole, the scene seems to corroborate the Danaids' account and openly invite spectators to feel antipathy for the Aegyptids. Yet it also leaves open the possibility that the Aegyptids may not be quite as this performance would lead spectators to believe.

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[615] Lines 903-4 suggest that the Herald has yet to tear the Danaids' clothes (εἰ μή). Lines 909-10 suggest that he on the verge or has just begun when Pelasgus intervenes.
[616] They also note the Herald's "sarcastic" tone throughout this exchange.
[617] As evidenced by line 925 (εἰ ψαύσειας…), he does not appear actually to have touched the Danaids.

VII Greeks versus Barbarians, Again

The confrontation between Pelasgus and the Herald is once more presented superficially as a struggle of Greek versus barbarian. Despite the momentum created against the Aegyptids in the previous scene, however, Greece does not fair as well as one might expect. Pelasgus does not back down from the Herald; war between Argos and Egypt is all but certain. Most spectators would appreciate that Pelasgus is beholden to the democratic decree to defend the Danaids and thus takes an aggressive stance against the Aegyptids. Yet Pelasgus' behavior may not be entirely above reproach. Spectators may have been disturbed by his treatment of the Egyptian Herald and by the fact that he is unable to answer the Herald's assertions regarding the Danaids.

VII.1 Barbarians?

Pelasgus casts his struggle against the Herald as one of Greek versus barbarian, and the play reinforces parallels between his situation and that of the Athenians facing the invading Persians. He calls the Herald a foreigner (κάρβανος) who is too bold (ἐγχλίεις ἄγαν) in the face of Greeks (914), accuses him of impiety against the Greek gods (921), and implicitly contrasts Greek free-speech with the barbaric alternative (948-9). Pelasgus also mocks Egyptians on the basis of their effeminacy, a common charge against barbarians (cf. Hall 1996: 2, 13).[618] He informs the Herald that the Aegyptids will be contending with an army of men rather than a group of scared women (912-3) and, when the Herald prays that victory and strength be present for men, Pelasgus suggests that the Argives are the real men; the Egyptians are mere "barley-beer-drinkers" (952-3).

[618] See also Hall 1989: 81.

Pelasgus' accusations may have appealed to spectators that held a bias against foreigners from the East and who might be more likely to appreciate Pelasgus' spirited attack against a shared enemy. And given how the Aegyptids have been portrayed thus far in the play by the Danaids, many spectators may have been disposed to accept Pelasgus' accusations as truth.

VII.2 A JUST CLAIM?

The actual exchange between Pelasgus and the Herald is subtler than Pelasgus' demarcations might imply, however. Even in the face of Pelasgus' insults (cf. 915), the Herald does not immediately declare war against the Argives. At first, he simply asserts the Aegyptids' claim on the Danaids.[619] He asserts that justice is on his side because the Aegyptids are simply retrieving what they have lost (916, 918). Spectators may have recalled here the question that Pelasgus earlier posed to the Danaids:

> εἴ τοι κρατοῦσι παῖδες Αἰγύπτου σέθεν
> νόμωι πόλεως, φάσκοντες ἐγγύτατα γένους
> εἶναι, τίς ἄν τοῖσδ' ἀντιωθῆναι θέλοι;
> δεῖ τοί σε φεύγειν κατὰ νόμους τοὺς ὄικοθεν,
> ὡς οὐκ ἔχουσιν κῦρος οὐδὲν ἀμφὶ σοῦ.
> (387-391)
> if the children of Aegyptus rule you
> by the law of the city, claiming to be nearest of kin
> who would willingly oppose them?
> you must flee in accordance with your local laws
> such that they have no ownership over you.

If the Herald's assertion of ownership is valid, the hypothetical situation that Pelasgus described corresponds exactly to the situation in which he now finds himself. When Pelasgus originally asked the Danaids if the Aegyptids had a claim on them, they failed to

[619] He only declares war when it becomes clear that Pelasgus will not return the girls.

respond, and spectators may have concluded that the Aegyptids did in fact have a claim on the Danaids (see above).[620] Now the Herald confirms these suspicions, and Pelasgus' own words place him and the Danaids indisputably in the wrong.[621] Spectators' suspicions may have been further aroused when Pelasgus fails to dispute the Aegyptids' claim and instead challenges the Herald on unrelated matters.

Spectators may nevertheless have rejected the Herald's claims for two significant reasons. First, some spectators simply would have doubted the Herald's assertion that the Aegyptids have a legal right to the Danaids. No evidence has been adduced in the play that would contradict the claim that the Aegyptids have a right to the Danaids, but no proof has been offered to support it either. And spectators might have considered the claim to be in keeping with the overreaching nature that the Danaids attribute to the Aegyptids. It is also exactly the kind of claim one would expect the Aegyptids to use in retrieving the Danaids, regardless of its truth.[622] Second, the Herald's claim upon the Danaids might have had the ring of slavery.[623] Few if any audience members would have opposed the institution of slavery in itself, but some spectators may have been troubled by the particular kind of slavery that the Aegyptids would be imposing on the Danaids, i.e., slavery forced upon family members under the guise of marriage (cf. Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 36, 38). If so, these spectators might have considered Pelasgus' earlier qualms about helping the Danaids cowardly and approved his new resolve to defend the

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[620] Cf. Garvie 1969: 220, Mackinnon 1978: 78, Johansen-Whittle I 1980: 30, 38, Fisher 1992: 263, Sommerstein 1997: 76, Turner 2001: 33.
[621] It is worth noting the Aegyptids' otherwise "unnecessary" emphasis on the Danaids as their cousins in the context of their claim (933). See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 242.
[622] According to Macurdy 1944: 95-100 the audience might have rejected the Aegyptids' claim on the assumption that (on the analogy of Athenian law) it is invalid because Danaus is still alive.
[623] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 234: "The Herald regards the Danaids as runaway slaves…subject to summary seizure..."

Danaids from the Aegyptids regardless of Egyptian law. These spectators would have appreciated Pelasgus' insistence that the Aegyptids can remove the Danaids only if they can persuade them and the girls go willingly (940-1).

VII.3 *PROXENIA*

Pelasgus's complaints have the appearance of justice. When he announces that the city has reached a democratic decree never to give in to threats of violence and hand over the Danaids (942-4), the intimation of official process lends the decision credibility and appears calculated to appeal to the sensibilities of democratic Athenians. Pelasgus specifically draws attention to the Herald's failure to follow proper procedures and to his impiety. He claims that by failing to produce any προξένος, "official friends" or representatives, in Argos,[624] the Herald has not approached the King in the correct way (917). When the Herald says that Hermes is his προξένος (920), Pelasgus accuses him of irreverence to the gods (921, 923). And the Herald does not deny it (922). When the Herald suggests that Pelasgus is not showing the proper respect for strangers (926), Pelasgus informs him that he does not receive strangers who would despoil the gods (927).

It is hard to know how Athenian spectators would have respond to Pelasgus' insistence that the Herald have a *proxenos*. An institution called *proxenia* existed in the classical world whereby Greek cities gained representation in "diplomatic, religious, and commercial" matters in foreign cities and vice versa (Wallace 1970: 189 n.2). Spectators may thus have appreciated that Pelasgus' challenges to the Herald with regard to

[624] See Wallace 1970: 189, Marek 1984, and Herman 1987 on the institution of *proxenia*.

proxenia would be accurate if Pelasgus' institution conformed to the one that they knew. Yet earlier references to *proxenia* in the *Suppliants* do not conform to what we know of this institution and suggest a less formal relationship, more akin to that between guests and hosts (*xenia*).[625] Pelasgus asked the Danaids how they came to Argos without a *proxenos* (239), but it did not stop him from hearing their pleas. The Danaids subsequently request that Pelasgus be a just and reverent *proxenos* (418-20). For Pelasgus and the Danaids, a *proxenos* seems to be little more than a local representative.[626] Given that the absence of a *proxenos* was not a problem for the Danaids, spectators might see it as a poor justification in and of itself for rejecting the Egyptians and the Herald in particular, whose assertion that Hermes is his *proxenos* suggests that he should be exempt from such requirements by virtue of being a herald.

VII.4 Foreign Gods

The Herald's relationship to the Greek gods would potentially be more problematic for spectators. According to the Danaids, the Aegyptids are impious and without respect for the gods. At first, the Herald appears to be no different from the masters he represents. In his exchange with the Danaids, he rejects Greek gods (893; cf. 872). Yet he is not entirely ignorant of the Greek pantheon. His reference to Hermes "the Searcher" (μαστηρίῳι, 920) may have not only demonstrated his knowledge of Greek practice, but also amounted to a religious argument for his claim upon the Danaids.

[625] See Hubbard 2004: 83 on the broader responsibilities of the *proxenos*. Vidal-Naquet 1997: 110 follows Gauthier in arguing that "the *proxenos* in Aeschylus' *Supplices* is not a *proxenos* in the classical sense of the word." Vidal-Naquet goes on to argue that, in the first place, Egypt would not have had a *proxenos* and secondly that the Danaids' ancestry "does not imply the right to a *proxenos*."
[626] According to Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 235, "Pelasgus probably assumes…that he, as king of the country, should have received notice…."

Presumably because of his willingness to strip the Danaids from the altar and his earlier rejections of the Greek gods (though Pelasgus did not witness them), Pelasgus accuses the Herald of being insincere (921).[627] But the Herald does not simply reject the gods as an act of defiance. He offers a rational basis for his lack of reverence that might be thought to extend to the Aegyptids: the Herald professes to reject the gods of Greece because they are not his own (894, 922). Would an audience of Athenians have disapproved of other cultures believing in their own gods to the exclusion of others? Herodotus, of course, assumes that gods' identities are to some degree universal and "that men should respect the gods revered by others" (Harrison 2000: 212),[628] though it is difficult to know the degree to which Herodotus' views would have overlapped with those of other Athenians in a previous generation. Johansen and Whittle argue that the Herald's disrespect for Greek religious institutions is "characteristically Egyptian" (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 222, citing Froidefond), but would have met with disapproval among Greeks. Yet the examples that Johansen and Whittle adduce show that they are thinking not of conflicting beliefs but of the destruction of holy temples and relics.[629] The Herald's argument certainly would not excuse an Egyptian defiling a Greek temple or even dragging an Argive citizen from a Greek holy place. The same might not be said of an Egyptian herald removing Egyptian women, upon whom his masters have a legal claim, from a Greek altar. Some Athenians may even have been uncomfortable

[627] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 235 and Zeitlin 1992: 215 accuse the Herald of sophism. Conacher 1996: 97 observes the "quaint irony" of the Herald's claim upon Hermes.
[628] Harrison cites the story of Cambyses, who is punished for the disrespect he shows to the Egyptian god Apis (Hdt. 3.38.1, 3.64.3).
[629] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 222 cite *Pers*. 809-12, *Ag*. 338-40, 525-8. The *Persians* passage alludes to the sack of Athens and the destruction of its statues of the gods and temples, but in the *Agamemnon*, the Greek army destroyed *Trojan* statues and altars. These passages may therefore be thought to show Greeks' respect for other religions, though one might argue that, at least according to Homer, the Trojans and the Greeks shared the same gods.

with the idea of foreigners paying homage to Greek gods.[630] In any case, the Herald's response to Pelasgus and the Danaids suggest that cultural differences rather than callousness may be at the root of the Aegyptids' "impiety." On the other hand, the Herald's rejection of Greek gods in favor of his own does stand in contrast to the behavior of the Danaids, who offer a shining example of cultural mutability, showing reverence for Greek gods and embracing their Greek heritage (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 222). Spectators may have judged the Herald more harshly on the basis of his failure to meet the standard set by the Danaids than on the basis of the intrinsic distastefulness of his viewpoint.

VII.5 JUDGING THE AEGYPTIDS

The overall effect of the introduction of the Herald would be to sway most spectators' sympathies back to the Danaids and draw attention away from potential problems in the Danaids' case. Doubts may nevertheless have remained. Spectators who were scandalized by the Herald's treatment of the Danaids would have found little reason to question Pelasgus' treatment of the Herald. And yet, whereas the Danaids have withheld information[631] and threatened the welfare of the Argives, the Aegyptids have done them no wrong. If their claim upon the Danaids is genuine, the Aegyptids have done no wrong whatsoever. Pelasgus nevertheless greets them with a very different kind of hospitality than that with which he met the Danaids. Judging the Aegyptids solely on

[630] Cf. Harrison 2000: 217, who argues that in Herodotus, "the belief in the identity of one's own and others' gods is all very well in theory—but not in practice." He goes on to observe that "[w]hen foreigners do attempt to propitiate Greek gods, it is frequently the case that no good comes of it."
[631] Pelasgus' insistence on openness and not secrecy (944-7) may have offered a subtle reminder of the Danaids' earlier secrecy.

the account of their enemies, Pelasgus defends the Danaids without concern for Egyptian law and threatens the Aegyptids should they attempt to retrieve their property. He rejects the Aegyptids' claim on the basis of technicalities and treats their Herald with the respect due to one of his station, threatening him and refusing to give the Herald his name upon request.[632] Pelasgus is, of course, bound by his oath to protect the Danaids, but an argument can be made that it is Pelasgus, not the Aegyptids, who is behaving in a manner unbefitting a Greek. Spectators may have detected an excess of prejudice and disrespect in Pelasgus' treatment of the Egyptian Herald, and the Herald's accusation that Pelasgus is not showing the proper respect for strangers (τοὔπος δ' οὐδαμῶς φιλόξενον, 926) may have resonated with these viewers. Pelasgus has committed himself to opposing the Aegyptids; spectators may be more wary of adopting a similarly hostile approach to them.

VIII Nagging Questions and Unknown Barbarians

Against a backdrop of excessive praise for Pelasgus and Argos,[633] the Danaids' song and their interaction with Danaus (966-1013) offer explicit cues to the audience regarding their lack of knowledge concerning the Aegyptids and raise questions about the Danaids' backstory, their present circumstances, and their future plans.

[632] See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 265-6; 274.
[633] The Danaids address Pelasgus as δῖε, a term usually reserved for gods (967); Pelasgus tells his daughters to give the Argives sacrifices and pour libation to them as if they were Olympian gods (980-1). See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: *loc. cit*.

VIII.1 Descriminating Against Foreigners

Both the Danaids and Danaus muse on the prejudice that foreigners face. In the context of housing, the Danaids observe that "everyone is quick to cast blame upon barbarians" (literally, "those who speak other languages": πᾶς τις ἐπειπεῖν ψόγον ἀλλοθρόοις εὔτυκος, 972-3). Soon afterwards Danaus advises his daughters that "the unknown group is tested in time" (ἀγνῶθ' ὅμιλόν πως ἐλέγχεσθαι χρόνωι, 993). Spectators who were suspicious of the Danaids and attuned to the possibility that they have misrepresented the Aegyptids may have been quick to apply these lessons both to the Danaids and to the Aegyptids. Danaus' statement warns spectators to reserve judgment regarding both of them. The Aegyptids are certainly an "unknown group," and it remains to be seen whether they will be as bad as the Danaids suggest. Likewise, the Danaids may not be what they appear to be. The knowledge that they will kill the Aegyptids on their wedding night casts Danaus' statement in a sinister light. Both of these utterances may give the audience pause and alert them to problematic elements in Danaus' subsequent advice to his daughters.[634]

VIII.2 A Father's Wishes?

Danaus' advice to his daughters suggests that the aversion to men may be general rather than specific and, more striking, that the aversion may be more Danaus' than the Danaids'. The Danaids' reference to a dowry (φερνήν) given them by Danaus (979)

[634] Danaus' comments at 994-5, πᾶς δ' ἐν μετοίκωι γλῶσσαν εὔτυκον φέρει κακήν, τό τ' εἰπεῖν εὐπετὲς μύσαγμά πως, "against a metic, everyone bears a tongue ready with evils and speaking words of defilement is easy" may also warn spectators against judging the Aegyptids before they have all the information, though, of course, the Aegyptids are not (yet?) metics.

suggests that he intends for them to marry.[635] Yet, Danaus expresses his fear that, being of marriageable age, his daughters are liable to bring him shame. He complains that this "tender fruit" (τέρειν' ὀπώρα), i.e., pubescent women, is difficult to guard (996-8). He goes on to justify, and simultaneously subvert, his fears by suggesting that men's desire for beautiful women is instilled in them by Aphrodite and is thus both natural and inevitable (999-1005).[636] He frames these thoughts by asking his daughters not to bring shame to him or to themselves (996; 1008).[637] Danaus closes his speech with the striking injunction to "honor self-control more than life" (1013).

Danaus' words are ostensibly motivated by the issue of housing for the Danaids (cf. 957-63, 971-2, 1009-11) (cf. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 290), but they have far reaching implications (cf. Conacher 1996: 99). Danaus emphasizes how the Danaids' decision will affect him (cf. "do not shame *me*"; "do not give pleasure to *my* enemies" at 1009) and explicitly warns the Danaids off sexual encounters with men. From these indications, spectators may have concluded that he is in fact the source of their aversion to marriage. Danaus' plea for the Danaids' to avoid sexual relations of any sort corresponds to earlier indications that the Danaids were averse to marriage and men in general. But his concerns and commands suggest that he at least does not believe that they would be opposed to all men, perhaps only the Aegyptids (cf. von Fritz 1936: 162, Ireland 1974: 28, Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 290).[638] And even their aversion to the

[635] See, however, Ireland 1974: 21, who points out that Danaus would be unlikely to give the Danaids a dowry and the Danaids unlikely to accept it if they were in fact opposed to marriage in any form.
[636] I take this to be the overall import of this very corrupt passage. See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 294-6.
[637] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 289 note the use of "Ringcomposition…to bring out the unity of thought in the section."
[638] Turner 2001: 30 suggests that "[o]ne should not, however, assume that his fear of their sexual activity necessarily indicates a pro-marriage stance on their part." De Bouvrie 1990: 152 asserts that Danaus'

Aegyptids may stem from their father. His advice to honor self-control, i.e., the avoidance of sex, more than life may be understood by those familiar with the Danaid myth as a thinly veiled command to kill the Aegyptids before submitting to them (cf. Johansen-Whittle 1980: 303, Rösler 2007: 186, Zeitlin 1992: 209).

Although the idea that Danaus is behind the Danaids' actions appears to be a new development (at least in this play), the interaction here between the daughters and their father offers evidence that the Danaids' have been acting under his guidance throughout the *Suppliants* and that Danaus may be working toward an objective that is as yet unknown to them. Danaus' absence in a number of key scenes may have led audience members to discount him as a subordinate or peripheral figure in the Danaids' lives (see above), but he emerges once more in this scene as the Danaids' leader. The Danaids refer to him as their father, who plans ahead (πρόνοον), has demonstrated cleverness (προτέρα μῆτις), and acts as their adviser (βούλαρχον, cf. 11: βούλαρχος) (969-71). Despite the Danaids' apparently independent action throughout the play, some spectators may have concluded that Danaus is the primary reason for their aversion to men and for their flight from Egypt. Danaus advises his daughters to remain chaste in Argos, and thereby indicates to spectators that they might not do so of their own volition. Danaus then implies that the Danaids' chastity, not simply their aversion to the Aegyptids, is the reason for their flight, ὧν πολὺς πόνος πολὺς δὲ πόντος οὔνεκ' ἐρόθη δορί (1006-7), "that for which there was much labor and on account of which the sea was traversed by boat." The Danaids' response likewise suggests that they have been adhering to an earlier

words are simply a dramatic pretext "in order to give them the opportunity once more to demonstrate their abnormal attitude to sex."

agreement. They assure their father that they will not turn away from their previous resolve (1017) (cf. Turner 2001: 30).

VIII.3 Danaus' Secret

If the Danaids' actions throughout the play are really part of Danaus' elaborate plan, what would spectators suppose that Danaus is trying to achieve? Some spectators might have thought that Danaus is simply afraid that his daughters' behavior will reflect badly on him (cf. Cairns 1993: 186). Spectators familiar with the Danaid myth might conclude that he is somehow orchestrating the murder of the Aegyptids. But Danaus and his daughters certainly do not lay matters out for the audience. As in earlier encounters, they seem to allude to matters as if they have already been discussed.

Danaus' words point once more to the possibility that he is striving to become the tyrant of Argos. The gift of permanent attendants and bodyguards (as opposed to the escort he received earlier) is a sign of the Argives' esteem for Danaus (cf. 986: τίμιον γέρας, "prize of honor"), but, as Johansen and Whittle note here, "to ask for a bodyguard was apparently a routine step towards making oneself tyrant" (see also the above discussion of Aegisthus) and, thus, Danaus' request "appears to foreshadow his eventual succession to the kingship" (III 1980: 277).[639] It is worth noting in this regard that Danaus does not consider the guard a fighting force with which to oppose the obvious threat of the Aegyptids but rather protection from secret attempts on his life (cf. θανὼν λάθοιμι) from unexpected sources (ἀέλπτως) (987-8), perhaps the Argives?

[639] Cf. Peisistratus' similar tack in establishing his tyranny (Hdt. 1.56-68) and the depiction of Aegisthus at the conclusion of the *Agamemnon*. Cf. Sommerstein 1997: 75.

At the same time that Danaus is emerging from behind the scenes, the play seems to undercut his position. Taken at face value, Danaus is praising Argos when he refers to the decision that the Argives made in the Danaids' favor and to the bodyguard that they bestowed upon him (980-86). Yet the manner in which Danaus describes the decision highlights the deception that helped bring it about: καί μου τὰ μὲν πραχθέντα πρὸς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς φίλως, πικρῶς δ' ἤκουσαν αὐτανεψίους (983-4), "and from me they heard what happened favorably toward us, their kin, but with bitterness toward your cousins." Danaus' phrasing suggests that the Argives' response was less a function of the real situation than of the way in which Danaus described it ("they heard from me…"). Furthermore, spectators may have observed that Danaus' references to the Danaids' connection to the Argives (ἐγγενεῖς) and the Danaids' connection to the Aegyptids (αὐτανεψίους) point to a relationship between the Argives and the Aegyptids (a = b = c). This may have underlined for them the flaw in the use of kinship to convince the Argives to come aid.

VIII.4 The Oracle

Danaus makes no mention of an oracle in this speech, but Rösler has argued that Danaus' insistence that his daughters not bring shame upon *him* (996, cf. 1008-9), rather than all of them, by marrying is a veiled reference to the fact that, according to the oracle, by marrying, the Danaids will be bringing about the death of their father. He suggests that while Danaus words would suggest to those around him the kind of shame "feared by a father solicitous for the good name of his daughters," he is actually speaking of the shame that would come from the failure to preserve his life (2007: 185-6). This would be

a rather extreme case of euphemism. Rösler also argues that Danaus is speaking of the prospect of his death-by-marriage when he urges his daughters not commit a shameful act and give pleasure to his enemies (1008-9) (2007: 186). Yet, Danaus' statement is open to a number of explanations: anything painful or embarrassing that befalls Danaus or his daughters might be thought to give pleasure to anyone who considers themselves an enemy of Danaus.[640]

Thus, while Danaus' speech points to the subjectivity of the Danaids' presentation of the Aegyptids, draws attention to the Aegyptids' problematic treatment at the hands of the Argives, implies that the Danaids have not been prey to their emotions but are carrying out their father's commands, and hints at Danaus' possible intentions, it offers no decisive evidence that any of these suspicions will be substantiated. The Aegyptids may turn out to be as bad as the Danaids have made them out to be, the Danaids' motives may be laudable, and Danaus may be the ideal father. The point is that, though the questions have been raised, no unassailable answers emerge based on the evidence supplied.[641]

IX WHO KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

The end of the *Suppliants* lays bare the tension between virginity and sexuality that has run through the play. Rather than resolving the tension, it makes an explicit statement of ambiguity.

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[640] Johansen and Whittle III 1980: 290 point out that the Danaids' "sexual misbehaviour" in Argos would hardly please the Aegyptids and suggests that Danaus' "enemies must therefore be Argives" and "that Danaus here unwittingly makes a forecase of future complications." This interpretation illustrates how open Danaus' statement is but seems too literal.

[641] If the oracle is intended to be a surprise, as Sicherl 1986 suggests, one might argue that the references to Danaus' preparations for tyranny are intended to throw spectators off the scent. They will be surprised to learn that he has no interest in tyranny but is instead merely trying to save his own life.

The closing song of the *Suppliants* is the source of great controversy. Although the manuscripts give no indication of any change of speaker, critics prompted by the song's seemingly contradictory content, the subsequent dialogue portion of the song, and the Danaids' address to their ὀπαδοὶ (1022, "attendants"), have divided the singing parts between two or more groups. It is generally agreed the Danaids sing the first and last strophic pairs (cf. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 306, Conacher (1996: 99). Praise for Aphrodite, Hera and the institution of marriage have led editors to attribute the second pair to another chorus composed of the Danaids' handmaidens (whom the Danaids addressed earlier at line 977) of Danaus' bodyguard, or of a hemi-chorus of Danaids (in which case the first strophic pair is likewise sung by only half of the Danaids).[642] The third pair contains the elements of a dialogue; critics distribute the lines between the Danaids and the party who sung the previous pair or to Danaus, if the parts are divided into a Danaid hemi-chorus.[643]

Because arguments for the dividing the song depend on its content rather than any external indications,[644] it is worth examining that content more closely before coming to any conclusions. The Danaids continue to offer prayers to the local gods and offer praise in the first strophic pair. They reject Egypt and embrace Argos, switching their

[642] Handmaidens: Kitto 1961: 16; Murray 1957, Rose 1957, Garvie 1969: 194-5, Lesky 1983: 66, Lloyd-Jones 1983: 49, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 60, Conacher 1996: 99. Bodyguards: Taplin 1977: 230-2, Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 307, Seaford 1987: 114, West 1990, Sommerstein 1996: 140, Rösler 2007: 187. Hemi-Chorus: Paley 1879 following Hermann; Tucker 1889, van der Graaf 1942, Murray 1957: 82; cf. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 306 for a strongly worded rejection of the possibility of hemi-choruses.
[643] Taplin 1977: 232, despite the fact that identifying the bodyguards as the singer of the previous song favors Danaus for the dialogue at 1052-61.
[644] Critics have often pointed to ὑποδέξασθε in the previous strophe as evidence that a response is necessary or at least possible. But according to Johansen-Whittle III (1980), 307, "ὑποδέξασθε appears from other uses of this verb to mean 'accept (kindly)', not to express an invitation to 'take up' the song…." See also Murray 1958: 82 n.6 and Taplin 1977: 231. Lloyd-Jones 1983: 49 cannot why else the presence of the Handmaidens would be emphasized: "[i]f the handmaidens have no special function, there is no reason why they should be explicitly introduced at l.975 f. See also Sommerstein 1977: 77.

allegiance from the Nile to the rivers of Argos (1024ff.). The Danaids then appeal to Artemis: "let holy Artemis watch over this band and pity it" (ἐπίδοι δ' Ἄρτεμις ἁγνὰ στόλον οἰκτιζομένα, 1030-1). This prayer has verbal affinities to the Danaids' first prayer to Artemis (cf. ἐπιδέτω at 145),[645] but the prayer itself does not reveal whether the Danaids are praying to Artemis in her guise as the divine representative of perpetual virginity (cf. 149-50) or as the goddess of childbirth (676-7). The second half of the Danaids' prayer appears to hold the key, albeit a key that is, because of textual problems, beyond our reach. I print Page's text:

> μηδ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκας
> γάμος ἔλθοι· Κυθερείαι
> στυγερὸν πέλοι τόδ' ἆθλον.
> (1030-33)
> Nor let marriage come
> out of necessity; let this prize [i.e. forced marriage]
> be hateful to Aphrodite

The Danaids pray to avoid a forced marriage, but the relationship of Aphrodite to their wish is more difficult to construe. According to Page's text, the Danaids unequivocally see Aphrodite as a concerned party, if not exactly a potential ally, in their aversion to marriage by force (cf. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: *loc. cit.*). Thus, while they reject marriage by force, they do not necessarily exclude the possibility of sex and marriage in the future (cf. Ireland 1974: 26).[646] The question is whether they reject marriage under compulsion or consider all marriage a form of compulsion.[647]

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[645] Johansen-Whittle III 1980) 316. Johansen and Whittle also note the resemblance of this prayer to the Danaids' prayer to Zeus which opened the play.

[646] A less than antagonistic stance is in keeping with the Danaids' praise of the rivers of Argos as πολύτεκνοι (1028).

[647] The text of the manuscript offers a less clear-cut, though not necessarily conflicting, meaning. It reads Κυθερείας without the punctuation separating it from the preceding phrase and στύγειον for στυγερὸν. Critics take Κυθερείας with ἀνάγκας such that the Danaids refer to marriage "by the necessity of

The general import of the next stanza is clear enough. It expresses respect for Aphrodite and approval of her domain. The apparent contradiction between this position and earlier statements by the Danaids has led critics to attribute the lines to another party (cf. Sommerstein 1977: 76). Even the possibility of a Danaid hemi-chorus is rejected on the grounds that "[n]othing in this play…has prepared for any split of opinion amongst the Danaids" (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 306).[648] Yet it is not unheard of for choruses to express new and seemingly inconsistent opinions (Taplin 1977: 231), and the Danaids may not even be contradicting themselves. Their praise for Aphrodite need not contradict the previous statement, but rather clarify it: spectators learn decisively here that the Danaids are in fact in favor of marriage under the right circumstances. They could have lain to rest their fears regarding the Danaids' abnormal sexuality and place the responsibility for the Danaids' actions on Danaus. In the mouths of the Danaids, the emphasis upon Yearning, Persuasion, and Harmony make perfect sense: these are the elements one would find in a consensual marriage, but which would be absent in a forced marriage such as the one the Danaids are struggling against. One can understand the

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Κυθερεία." Cf. Conacher 1996: 101. This reading is also open to interpretation. It could point to an antagonistic relationship between the Danaids and Aphrodite if the Danaids are referring to the necessity that Aphrodite has imposed on *them*. If, however, the Danaids are referring to the necessity imposed upon the Aegyptids by Aphrodite (i.e., the Aegyptids are compelled by desire to force marriage upon the Danaids), the Danaids may be complaining about the effect that Aphrodite has on mortals but need not be placing themselves in defiant opposition to the goddess. Reading στύγειον, one comes up with something like "let this prize [i.e., forced marriage] be Stygian [i.e. to the death]" (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 318). In addition to offering a satisfying contrast with the preceding references to rivers (Johansen-Whittle III 1980), this reading exemplifies the ambiguity of the Danaids' relationship with death. They warn that with a forced marriage will come death. The comment is in keeping with earlier references to suicide but contains a threat that will resonate with those looking forward to the murder of the Aegyptids. Whether one accepts Page's reading or that of the manuscripts, it is apparent that the Danaids are primarily concerned with forced marriage. Though they may place themselves in opposition to Aphrodite, in light of Danaus' warning to the Danaids, it seems more likely that they believe that she will play a deciding role in determining their fate. De Bouvrie 1990: 153 takes Κυθερείας with γάμος. At best, this would contribute little the meaning of the passage. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 317 rejects this reading as "an intolerable tautology, all γάμος belonging to Aphrodite by definition."

[648] See also Lloyd-Jones 1983: 49 and Winnington-Ingram 1983: 60 n.20.

reference to "Yearning, to whom nothing is denied" (1039) as an implicit criticism of the Aegyptids' use of force. The praise of Aphrodite as αἰολόμητις (1036), "of many wiles," might, however, have given some audience members pause. This epithet is usually given to figures preeminent in cunning such as Prometheus, Sisyphus and Odysseus (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 323). This would be a particularly appropriate way to appeal to Aphrodite for a group of women who plan to beguile their suitors with the promise of marriage and sex only to kill them on their wedding night. For this very reason, this line would be likely to raise questions regarding the Danaids role in the impending murder of the Aegyptids.

Most problematic for the attribution of the passage to the Danaids is the praise of Hera, whose power and whose bond with Zeus the speaker acknowledges (1035). Even if the Danaids are not opposed to marriage as an institution, they have repeatedly drawn attention to Hera's role in Io's suffering (cf. 162-7, 562-4, 586-7) and have identified with their ancestress in her struggle against the goddess. This would not necessarily prevent them from acknowledging Hera's undeniable power, which would be made more evident by her role in Io's suffering, or from showing her the proper respect.[649] It might, however, weigh against attributing these lines to the Danaids. On the other hand, the praise of Hera might help those who would attribute the lines to the Argive bodyguards. She is the patron goddess of Argos, and the Argives' reverence for her might be thought to explain why the speakers detect a problem with the Danaids' rejection of marriage.[650]

[649] The Danaids do not insult the goddess outside the context of Io's story.
[650] Taplin 1977 notes that the Argives are the most likely addressees of the Danaids earlier praise of Argos (1026-29). Cf. van der Graaf 1942: 283. Johansen-Whittle III 1980 points out that the masculine participle γανάοντες (1019) assumes male addressees. Sommerstein 1977: 77 agrees but observees that this address may be limited to the call for procession.

Even so, it is difficult to believe that the audience would not have considered the detailed praise of Aphrodite's wiles untoward when addressed to young girls by men whom they do not know.[651] And hints of a marriage song between bodyguards and Danaids, as Seaford has suggested (2001; cf. Rösler 2007: 188), does not explain how the Danaids will come to marry the Aegyptids.

There is no reason why the Handmaidens could not praise Hera. It would establish their commitment to conventional feminine virtues and bolster their opposition to the Danaids' rejection of Aphrodite (if this is, in fact, what it is). Yet why would so much emphasis be placed on the views of the Handmaidens (cf. 1034)? If the Danaids have rejected Aphrodite and traditional roles for women (as is usually assumed by those who argue in favor of another chorus), the audience presumably knows that this is problematic without being told as much by the Handmaidens.[652] And no one argues that these Handmaidens play an important role in a subsequent play.[653] If we attribute these lines to the Danaids, they would ostensibly be reassuring the audience of their conventional views of marriage and sexuality while laying the groundwork for their marriage to and subsequent murder of the Aegyptids.

The antistrophe, which is also generally attributed to the Handmaidens or the Argive bodyguards, expresses fear at the prospect of the Aegyptids' arrival and the possibility that they will seize the Danaids (1043-4), surprise that the Aegyptids have managed to reach Argos safely (1045-6), resignation to fate and acknowledgement that Zeus's will is hard to discern (1047-49), and finally an observation of how commonplace

[651] Sommerstein 1977 amusingly observes that "[m[en who tell girls that they are setting too high a value on virginity commonly have an ulterior motive."
[652] One might also ask why the Handmaidens would praise Aphrodite as αἰολόμητις.
[653] This does not, of course, mean that it is not possible.

marriage is for women (1050-1). As emended by Burges (and printed by Page), the grammar of lines 1043-4 argues against attributing the lines to the Danaids though its content leaves open the possibility:

> φυγάδεσσιν δ᾽ ἔτι ποινὰς κακά τ᾽ ἄλγη
> πολέμους θ᾽ αἱματόεντας προφοβοῦμαι;
>
> for the fugitives, punishment to come, evil suffering
> and bloody battles I fear.

One might expect the Danaids to express fear on their own behalf—we have seen it often enough, and they have already referred to themselves specifically as fugitives (e.g., 359, 820). It might be odd, however, if in the same sentence the Danaids use a collective first person singular only to refer back to themselves with a plural noun ("I am afraid for us exiles…"),[654] but the text of 1043 is hardly certain.[655] As they stand, one might be tempted to give the lines to the Handmaidens for whom an expression of fear for their mistresses would be natural. The sentiment seems inappropriate for the bodyguards. First, it would be surprising if Argives, who will actually do the fighting in a war to defend not only the Danaids, but also their own homeland and families, were primarily concerned with how the fighting will affect the Danaids (cf. Sommerstein (1977: 78). Second, the fears reflect a pessimism that would be unseemly for men on the eve of battle.

The singer of the antistrophe appears to conclude from the Aegyptids' successful voyage to Argos, despite the Danaids' prayers to Zeus to the contrary, that Zeus's will is

[654] There is nothing strange about a Chorus referring to itself in the singular. There is even precedent for the Chorus changing person in the same speech, if not the same sentence: note the Chorus's shift from "we" to "I" in lines 776-780. Cf. Kaimio 1970.

[655] The manuscript prints the impossible φυγάδει (which is still plural) for φυγάδεσσιν and ἐπιπνοίαι for ἔτι ποινὰς. See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 327-30. Johansen and Whittle also note that προροβοῦμαι is "an extremely rare verb, apparently attested only here in classical Greek" (330).

inscrutable. This leads the speaker to wonder if marriage (presumably with the Aegyptids) might be in store for the Danaids. It is hard to imagine why the Argives would be surprised that the Aegyptids have reached Argos successfully.[656] The only hint of danger to the Aegyptids that has been addressed in the play is the Danaids' repeated prayer for them to drown before reaching Argos. The evident failure of this prayer is most likely the source of surprise in these lines. The bodyguards did not even witness the prayer (Sommerstein 1977: 79). The Handmaidens would have heard the prayers, but, if they consider the Danaids' views of marriage unhealthy and their view of Aphrodite potentially impious, would they really be surprised at Zeus's failure to heed a misguided prayer?[657] The expression once again seems most natural for the Danaids, who are the party most likely to be surprised by the fact that Zeus did not answer their prayers.

Antistrophe β (1043-51) conveys fundamental uncertainty with regard to the future coupled with resolution with regard to its outcome, whatever it may be. Lines 1045-6 confirm that the speaker of 1043-4 was concerned with Zeus's failure to intervene on the Danaids' behalf. Line 1047 conveys the speaker's resignation to this fact and its implications. The final observation regarding the pervasiveness of marriage suggests that the speaker considers marriage for the Danaids among the possibilities that Zeus may

[656] The Danaids made the trip successfully before them. In that case Pelasgus was surprised at the circumstances under which the Danaids came to Argos, not that they were physically able to make the trip from Egypt to Argos (238-40). One might argue that this is the first that the bodyguards have heard of the Aegyptids' approach and that this line shows their surprise. The possibilities for different speakers would be greater if one interpreted the question as a plaintive aside: "why ever did they make this voyage…?" This reading would, however, take some of the strength away from εὔπλοιαν. Smyth gives the line to the Handmaidens and makes the Danaids are the subject. For Smyth the line does little more than register surprise that the Danaiads were able to make the journey even with the Aegyptids pursuing them. One might suggest that the Handmaidens are asking why the Danaids fled knowing that they would end up being caught anyway. See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 331.

[657] One could argue that the Handmaidens believe it possible that Zeus would answer the Danaids' prayers based on their shared kinship regardless of whether or not the object of these prayers was a worthy one. One might also suggest that it this is an ironic question intended to prompt the Danaids to a realistic appraisal of their circumstances.

have in mind. And the context, coming just after the fears of the approaching Aegyptids, strongly suggests that the marriage under consideration is between the Danaids and Argives, making it difficult to give these lines to the Argive bodyguards.[658] These lines compose an argument: war and suffering are on the horizon for the Danaids and there might be a way around them: the fact that Zeus has not answered their prayers and kill the Aegyptids suggests that he may have something else in store for them. The Danaids cannot resist fate, and who knows what Zeus has in mind? Even if it is marriage to the Aegyptids, it is not so bad: other women have been married before them. One can easily imagine this as gentle consolation spoken by the Handmaidens who believe they are speaking in the Danaids' best interest (Sommerstein 1977: 78).[659] Yet I think that these lines would be more compelling, and more dramatic, if they are viewed as a slow process of realization on the part of (at least some of) the Danaids that it may not be possible to avoid marrying the Aegyptids. Though disappointed by the fact that Zeus did not destroy the Aegyptids, the Danaids are willing to consider the implications of this development.

This reading is borne out if one attributes the dialogue that follows to Danaid hemi-choruses or reads it as a kind of internal dialogue between the Chorus members as we see in *Agamemnon*. Here the Danaids ponder Zeus's will and how it affects them. One might translate the dialogue loosely as follows:

A: ὁ μέγας Ζεὺς ἀπαλέξαι
γάμον Αἰγυπτογενῆ
B: τὸ μὲν ἄν βέλτατον εἴη
σὺ δὲ θέλγοις ἄν ἄθελκτον

[658] I find it unlikely that the Argives would console the Danaids about having to marry the Aegyptids, *pace* Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 332-3. See Sommerstein 1977: 78.
[659] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: *loc. cit.* emphasize the lack of ἄν and dismissing the emendation πέλει, argues that this is a wish. Sommerstein 1977: 78-9, following Kruse as reported in Tucker (1889), 196, argues that one must understand the ἄν from line 1047 and take these lines as a connected thought.

A: σὺ δέ γ᾽ οὐκ οἶσθα τὸ μέλλον.
B: τί δὲ μέλλω φρένα Δίαν
καθορᾶν, ὅψιν ἄβυσσον;
μέτριον νῦν ἔπος εὔχου
A: τίνα καιρόν με διδάσκεις;
B: τὰ θεῶν μηδὲν ἀγάζειν.[660]

A: Great Zeus, keep me from marrying
the offspring of Aegyptus
B: That would be best
but you would be persuading
one who cannot be persuaded (i.e. Zeus, cf. 1048-9; or perhaps the Aegyptids, who will force the marriage upon them)
A: But you don't know the future (i.e., you do not know what Zeus intends)
B: Why would I presume to look down into Zeus's mind,
a bottomless sight?
Now temper your prayer (i.e., do not ask Zeus to subvert his will, that you marry the Aegyptids)
A: How?
B: Do not ask too much of the gods

The Danaids do not want to marry the Aegyptids but are beginning to suspect that the marriage may be a part of Zeus's plan. One part of the chorus therefore advises the other to refrain from prayers that are directed specifically against the Aegyptids and which might be incompatible with Zeus's will.

Also in keeping with the interpretation that the Danaids are pondering an unpalatable but foreordained marriage to the Aegyptids is the remark in the final antistrophe, in which the Danaids approve "that which is better than evil" (1069) or "the better part of evil" and τὸ δίμοιρον (1070), the "two-thirds portion," i.e., two portions of

[660] See Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 335, who diagrams the three ways in which modern editors (including Haupt, Wilamowitz, Mazon, Weir Smyth, Vürtheim, Weil, Wecklein, Kirchhoff, Murray, Tucker, Headlam, and Page) have distributed the lines. This distribution was originally suggested by Tucker and is printed by Headlam and Page. Johansen and Whittle find the cotent of this distribution unobjectionable but resist it on the grounds that "[o]n the analogy of *Sept*. 875ff., E. *Alc*. 86ff., *Supp*. 1123ff., *Tr.* 153ff., *Rh*. 692ff. one would expect the changes of speaker to coincide in strophe and antistrophe…" and settle therefore on the distribution devised by C. G. Haupt and printed by Wilamowitz, Mazon, Weir Smyth, and Vürtheim. Though tempting, based as it is on only one example from Aeschylus, the position this evidence does not seem decisive.

good, one of evil. The Danaids are clearly settling for something. Critics who assume that the Danaids remain steadfast in their resistance to marrying the Aegyptids either fail to explain, or explain without recourse to the text of the play, the Danaids' begrudging acceptance of their lot. Taking a cue from the Danaids' prayer, κράτος νέμοι γυναιξίν (1068-9), "let [Zeus] give victory to women," Johansen and Whittle argue that the Danaids are willing to settle for an Argive victory against the Aegyptids, an outcome significantly better than defeat, but nevertheless tempered by the "evil" of war (Johansen-Whittle III 1980· 342-4).[661] The scholiast offers the more likely suggestion that the good in question is avoiding marriage to the Aegyptids (τῆι ἀπαλλαγῆι τοῦ γάμου) even if it means war and the chance of failure.[662] Both of these explanations require that the Danaids regret that the Argives will suffer, but the Danaids have yet to display a hint of such regret in the play. Their prayer for victory ignores the Argives altogether.[663] If, however, the Danaids are seriously considering marriage to the Aegyptids to avoid the possibility of greater suffering, it is easy to see what prompts them to reflect upon the lesser evil.[664] Their desire for power might be interpreted as a prayer not to be subsumed by husbands such as the Aegyptids (cf. 393 in which the Danaids pray not to be ὑποχείριος κράτεσιν ἀρσένων, "subject to the powers of men").

The Danaids' prayer at lines 1062-3 may be the most significant evidence that the Danaids are not the interlocutors of the preceding dialogue and are not considering

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[661] Cf. Rose 1957: 85: "…the best thing, the only good thing in fact, would have been to have no quarrel with their cousins, or no cousins to quarrel with, but since that may not be, the next best is to overcome them."

[662] Σ: ἡδέως ἔχω τὸ δίμοιρον τῶν κακῶν σὺν ἑνὶ ἀγαθῶι ὅ ἐστι τῆι ἀπαλλαγῆι τοῦ γάμου.

[663] In the "ode to Argos" the Danaids pray that the city not fall prey to war but fail to draw the connection to the present threat, which they have brought to the city.

[664] One might retain the positive sense of αἰνῶ, "to approve" (critics uniformly adopt a sense closer to "consent to"), so that the Danaids are making an implicit argument to themselves: "I approve the lesser evil, and should therefore…"

marriage to the Aegyptids. The vulgate text reads Ζεὺς ἄναξ ἀποστεροίη γάμον δυσάνορα δάιον. Johansen translates: "May Zeus our lord take away hostile marriage with hateful men" (Johansen 1970: 143). These lines pose two interrelated problems. First and foremost, the Danaids seem to be praying to avert marriage to the Aegyptids,[665] the very marriage that I believe they are considering. Secondly, if the Chorus of Danaids sings this prayer, Danaid hemi-choruses cannot be the interlocutors of the preceding dialogue. As Sommerstein points out, one hemi-chorus would be ignoring the advice to temper its prayer against marriage to the Aegyptids (1052-3). Worse yet, the other hemi-chorus would be ignoring its own advice (Sommerstein 1977: 76).[666] Thus, in order to salvage the Danaid hemi-choruses, one must show that this prayer is a mitigated form of the Danaids' earlier prayer and that it does not unequivocally rule out the possibility of marriage to the Aegyptids.

Whereas the Danaids specify marriage to the Aegyptids at 1053, at 1063 they only ask Zeus to avert a "hostile marriage" (γάμον…δάιον) to "bad men" (δυσάνορα). This is a subtle distinction, but the proximity of the two prayers and the request for an altered prayer might have drawn spectators' attention to the differences between them.[667] Add to this the positive treatment of marriage and sexuality in the strophe as a whole. The Danaids' prayer itself, to ward off *bad* marriages, suggests that the Danaids are open to other possibilities (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 340), and they go on to look with fondness upon Io's union with Zeus (1064-7). The Aegyptids are still the Danaids' most

[665] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 339 assert that this prayer is simply a repetition of the Danaids' prayer at 1052-3 "in a slightly varied form."
[666] According to Sommerstein, this is the only significant reason to reject the attribution of the dialogue to Danaid hemi-choruses.
[667] Cf. the view of Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 339 above.

obvious referents, but the new formulation creates a loophole: the Danaids are not averse to marrying the Aegyptids if they prove less horrible than the Danaids have thus far led spectators to believe. In addition to moderating their initial prayer, the Danaids' second prayer points to the possibility of a positive resolution of the Danaids' dispute with their cousins. Given the suspicions that the play has sown in the Danaids' account of the Aegytids, there is good reason for spectators unfamiliar with the Danaid myth to suspect that the Aegyptids might indded pass the Danaids' test. This interpretation of the Danaids' prayer also has the benefit of explaining the actual resolution of the dispute, if, as most believe, Aeschylus' trilogy conforms in broad outline with the Danaid myth as we know it. According to the myth, one of the Danaids will in fact marry her suitors, and it is presumably because he is not a hateful man and does not offer a hostile marriage. Thus, one can make an argument from the vulgate reading that the Danaids have in fact tempered their prayer, slightly but significantly.

The manuscript reading may, however, offer a more compelling solution, namely that the Danaids are praying for Zeus to deprive bad men of marriage. The vulgate reading is not without its problems. The verb ἀποστερέω generally denotes robbing or despoiling and "signifies deprival of what belongs or is due to another" (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 340). The Danaids are generally assumed to be the object of the verb but do not seem to have nor to want a claim to marriage with the Aegyptids. It is therefore difficult to see how Zeus might "deprive" them of it.[668] The Medicean supplies ἀποστερέω with γάμου (in place of γάμον), the genitive one would expect with the

[668] Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 340 explain that the Danaids have a claim on marriage, if not this particular one: "the Danaids ask Zeus to withhold from them what is every woman's proper lot, marriage." This seems far fetched.

verb,[669] and suggests that the Danaids are asking Zeus to take marriage away from the "hostile, bad man" (δυσάνορα δάιον).[670] Under the first reading, the Danaids submit to Zeus's will only if the suitors meet their approval. This version of the prayer demonstrates a more sophisticated understanding of the forces of necessity and suggests that the Danaids have internalized the advice to ask less of the gods. If it is fated that the Danaids will marry the Aegyptids, so be it. But let Zeus take marriage away from the Aegyptids if they prove to be hostile and bad men. As in the case of the previous reading, this prayer makes the prospect of marriage to the Aegyptids possible and hints at the possibility of a positive conclusion to the Danaids' struggles. Like the first reading, it simultaneously looks forward to the outcome of the dispute, but it conforms even more closely to events as they might actually happen. Fate will require the Danaids to marry the Aegyptids, and forty-nine of them will subsequently "deprive" their husbands of marriage. The Danaids' prayer for victory and their call for justice (δίδαι δίκας ἔπεσθαι) from the gods by means of λυτηρίοις μηχαναῖς, "plots that bring about dissolution," clearly foreshadow this event,[671] despite the fact that, as we have seen, the Danaids' desire for power can be interpreted innocently. With its echoes of Zeus's freeing Io (1065) (Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 345), one can (with most critics and interpreters) understand the Danaids' reference to λυτηρίοις μηχαναῖς as a prayer for freedom that brings peace.

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[669] According to Johansen-Whittle III 1980 this expectation is the source of the corruption.
[670] This reading is not without problems of its own. Johansen-Whittle III 1980: 340 rejects it primarily on the grounds that δάιον must be taken substantively and that the reading "would present a very strange expression in δάιον δυσάνορα ('a foe unwelcome as a husband'?)."
[671] It is not clear whether the Danaids will commit the act on their own or with Zeus's consent, though they are clearly praying for his help. One might understand the Danaids' reference to Zeus's εὐμενῆ βίαν, in hindsight, and similar references, in this regard.

Despite their reservations, the Danaids, and perhaps the audience with them, begin to suspect that it is Zeus's will that they marry the Aegyptids. Thus, at its conclusion, the *Suppliants* returns to the Aegyptids and suggests that the outcome of the situation it has introduced depends entirely on the nature of the Aegyptids. Their nature has been at issue throughout the play. Their brutality has been the crux of the Danaids' arguments against them, yet the Danaids' account of them and of themselves has raised questions regarding their reliability. For spectators in hope of a positive resolution, the behavior of the Aegyptids might determine how the Danaids respond to them. For those fully expecting the Danaids to marry and then murder them, the justice of the Aegyptids' position and their behavior will determine how the Danaids' act should be judged. Now the Aegyptids have reached the shore, and they have sent their Herald. Presumably they are only moments away. What better way to create tension and suspense than to place all the weight of the audience's expectation upon them?

X THE TRILOGY

Critics have traditionally held that the *Suppliants* is the first play of its trilogy and would have been followed by the *Aegyptids* and the *Danaids*.[672] Three sources are generally used to reconstruct subsequent events in the trilogy: fragments from the plays themselves (though no fragments of the *Aegyptids* survive), foreshadowing in the *Suppliants*, and other (mostly later) versions of the myth (cf. Johansen and Whittle I 1980: 40). From the stress placed upon the threat of war between the Argives and Aegyptids and the Danaids' prayer to avert war, most critics agree that the war takes

[672] See, however, the suggestion of Rösler 2007 and Sommerstein 1997, discussed in Chapter 4.

place or is narrowly avoided in the next play (cf. Garvie 1969: 181, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 57, Johansen and Whittle I 1980: 42). Based on Danaus' acquisition of a bodyguard, a traditional first step in establishing a tyranny, and other versions of the myth (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 57), it is often though that Danaus becomes king or tyrant of Argos (Garvie 1969: 199, Winnington-Ingram 1983: 57, 57 n.9). The easiest way for the playwright to achieve this would be to kill Pelasgus off in the war.

Everyone seems to agree that the Danaids murder the Aegyptids on their wedding night and that one Danaid, Hypermestra, spares her husband, Lynceus. The murder is foreshadowed in the play (see Chapter 3) and both the murder and the disobedience of Hypermestra are common to the vast majority of other versions of the Danaid myth. It is supposed that the murder takes place between the second and third plays (cf. von Fritz 1969: 166)—the Aegyptids are usually assumed to make up the Chorus (based on the title), and few can imagine how Aeschylus would manage killing off his Chorus. It has been suggested that fr. 124, in which the speaker calls for a "marriage song" or perhaps a song of betrothal in the morning, was sung at the beginning of the *Danaids*, before the murders of the Aegyptids were discovered (cf. Garvie 1969: 229, Johansen and Whittle I 1980: 41). It might also work after a reconciliation at the end of the play in reference to a new marriage, perhaps between the Danaids and different grooms, which is attested in Pindar P.9.111ff. (see Garvie 1969: 226). The most interesting fragment (125) is a statement of the beauty and the necessity of love, marriage, and sex for mortals, animals, and vegetable life. Pausanias reports a trial in which Danaus prosecutes Hypermestra for disobeying him (2.19.6), and some critics have supposed that Aphrodite's speech would work well as a defense of Hypermestra, similar to that of Athena on behalf of Orestes in

the *Eumenides* (cf. Winnington-Ingram 1983: 58, who has his doubts). Others have supposed that Aeschylus' trial had the city of Argos prosecuting Danaus. Aphrodite's lines might also have been spoken in praise of the Danaids' second marriage (cf. von Fritz 1962: 188-9, Winnington-Ingram 1961: 143; cf. Johansen and Whittle 1980: 42).

XI Conclusion

None of these reconstructions are, of course, certain. I have attempted to show in this and previous chapters, how spectators' reactions to Aeschylus' primary characters may have shifted over the course of watching the plays. It may be fitting, then, that at the conclusion of this project we are forced to take seriously the ambiguous portrayal of the Danaids one third of the way through their story, as we cannot say with any certainty how subsequent events in their story would be depicted.

My treatment of the play suggests that most spectators would be adjusting their view of the Danaids repeatedly as each new piece of evidence is revealed. This would not necessarily have been the case. Different spectators would pick up on different pieces of evidence, and their hypotheses regarding the Danaids would be biased in one direction or another as a result. As has been illustrated by other studies of the play, it is possible to follow one strand of the Danaids' characterization, while ignoring or downplaying evidence that might contradict one's view of them. This is not only a valid way to think of the play, but one that was no doubt common in practice. And yet the contradictory evidence is there, even if some spectators recognized it only in retrospect or not at all. I would argue that there is enough contradictory evidence to suggest that, regardless of their suspicions, many spectators would, and were intended to, reserve final

judgment regarding the Danaids until they learned more about them. Thus, spectators are left not only wondering whether the Argives face the Aegyptids in battle or the Danaids will acquiesce to the Aegyptids in order to save the city, but also unsure about what to hope for.

Conclusion

I have tried to show in this dissertation that the plays of Aeschylus are best understood as appeals to their predominantly male fifth-century Athenian audience centered around the presentation of dramatic character. I argue that an examination of the *Persians*, *Seven against Thebes*, and *Suppliants* in these terms reveals that these plays are not primitive, static, or simplistic plays from early in Aeschylus' career, but rather dramatically complex and mature works. More broadly, I hope to have shown that character studies are not hopelessly outdated, nor are they at odds with audience-centered and cultural studies. By combining these approaches, we gain a fuller understanding of how playwrights composed the plays and how spectators responded to them. I also hope to have shown that divergent responses to dramas based on individual experiences are not only the rule for spectators of tragedy, but directly influence how playwrights approached their dramatic characters.

Although Aeschylus' plots generally are relatively simple and straightforward, often devoted to staging one significant dramatic action, a large portion of the plays' content is devoted to describing characters' motives and circumstances: the reasons why the characters do what they do. And yet, we find that many of the indications Aeschylus gives over the course of a given play with regard to characters' motives and circumstances either fail to shed light upon the reasons for their actions or suggest drastically different reasons for them from one moment to the next. Thus, in the *Persians*, evidence in the play might lead spectators to believe that the inhabitants of the Persian Empire are terrifying, sacrilegious invaders who deserve to be punished or victims of an incompetent leader and a repressive regime. Similarly, Eteocles can be

seen as a heroic general willing to do anything to save his city, even if it means killing and dying by the hand of his brother, or, in stark contrast, as the misguided victim of his father's curse who is responsible for endangering the city in the first place. The *Suppliants* presents a number of possible explanations for the Danaids' actions while offering few decisive answers. Over the course of the play they appear to be helpless victims of horrible men; puppets controlled by their selfish father; girls intent upon recreating the experiences of a long-dead ancestress; burgeoning murderesses disguising their true motives; or paragons of filial piety who will do anything to save their father's life.

In all these cases, I maintain that the shifts and contradictions in the presentation of dramatic characters provide spectators with another level on which to appreciate the traditional stories upon which the tragedies were based. Aeschylus, just as much as Euripides, had to distinguish his plays from those of his predecessors. I argue that he did so primarily by offering them new and complex characters that force spectators to reevaluate mythical figures' canonical actions. Aeschylus' characters invite spectators to see old stories with new eyes. Spectators may have a sense of what will happen but not how or why.

Yet we also find Aeschylus manipulating his dramatic character for more specific purposes. In the *Persians*, the changing perspectives of the inhabitants of the Persian Empire would have invited, but not forced, many spectators to consider Athens' relationship not only to the Persians, but also to the Greeks who fought on the side of the Persians and who were now, in many cases, being integrated into the Greek federation. This range of possible responses to the play's depiction of the fall of the Persian Empire

would allow a wide range of spectators to appreciate the tragedy: as a celebration of their victory; as an insight into the experiences of their enemies; or as a warning about the dangers of success and Empire. The *Seven*'s shift in its depiction of Eteocles from admirable general to cursed son of Oedipus would provide a dramatic surprise for many in the audience. At the same time, ongoing tension between Eteocles' role as the city's defender and as one the chief threats to its welfare would have allowed spectators to experience both the tragedy of his hopeless position and the consolation of knowing that things may be better off with him dead. In the *Suppliants*, tantalizing hints and a myriad of positive and negative indications with regard to the Danaids and their situation coupled with a lack of decisive information would have left spectators in suspense as to the true nature of these women who will most likely murder their suitors on their wedding night.

The insights of film Theory, particularly those of Murray Smith and Noel Carroll, helped us gain a clearer understanding of the process through which spectators come to recognize the nature of dramatic characters as a play progresses ("recognition"), how they judge characters based on assumptions from daily life and from the theater and respond accordingly with feelings of sympathy or antipathy ("allegiance") and how insights into characters' thinking and focus on their perspective ("alignment") can facilitate a sense of recognition and allegiance, but do not always do so. We also saw that the plays' appeal to spectators' cultural and generic assumptions in their portrayal of dramatic characters and their situations leaves a provocative amount of interpretive freedom for spectators. We noted how the plays sometimes attempt to guide spectators' reaction toward a unified response and at other times take advantage of a certain level of ambiguity in the portrayal of a character to achieve suspense and surprise.

Whether one is dealing with the most character-driven or the most action-packed drama (not to mention rhetoric or epic), understanding how spectators would have responded to characters, i.e., knowing which characters they will care about, fear for, and pity and which characters they will dislike and hope to see fail, is essential to understanding how they experience the work. Because of Aeschylus' relatively simple plots and focus on complex figures acting in the public sphere, the approach to dramatic character developed in this dissertation is, I would argue, essential to understanding his plays. The efficacy of this approach is not, however, limited to the plays of Aeschylus. It can certainly be applied to the plays of Sophocles and Euripides that adopt an approach to dramatic character that is similar to Aeschylus'. Sophocles' *Antigone* is perhaps the most similar to the plays that we have examined here. It centers on the question of burying Polyneices, yet spectators cannot appreciate the significance of this act without evaluating the nature of its proponent, Antigone, and her adversary, Cleon, both of whom express themselves primarily through arguments with other characters. Spectators' relationship to Euripides' Medea is very close to their relationship to Clytemnestra. They are forced to evaluate Medea on the basis of, often deceptive, public pronouncements, and her motives and actions repeatedly elude their grasp. Even in these plays, however, one needs to pay special attention to how the changing duties of the Chorus in the plays of Sophocles and Euripides would affect their presentation of dramatic character.

In other tragedies, Sophocles and Euripides negotiate dramatic character in ways that are distinct from Aeschylus' approach, but a close examination of how spectators' relationship to characters progresses over the course of a play is still necessary to appreciate fully the plays. In the *Trachiniae* and *Electra*, Sophocles' characters' motives,

mindsets, and circumstances are clearly delineated. Sophocles derives dramatic effect in these plays using dramatic irony and by exploring the ethical significance of their actions, focusing on the emotional implications of how characters deal with their situations. Spectators' view of character is often used to raise questions about, or enhance the emotional effects of, inescapable or startling actions. In Euripides, We find spectators' opinions of characters used to problematize and undercut social, political, and religious viewpoints. We also see a focus on action and clearly defined characters of which Aeschylus' *Choephori*, with its multiple set-pieces, focus on complex action, and insights offered into the thinking of its characters, may be an antecedent. Paradoxically, it is often in the plays that rely most heavily on action and spend the least time defining their characters that spectators' relationship to the dramatic characters, knowing who is the hero and who the villain, is most important. Here, one must take into greater account the influence upon spectators of genre conventions such as character-types and standard plots (deception plays, suppliants plays, etc.). Thus, while one must take into account the particular cultural and generic assumptions which are at play, understanding how character is conveyed, that the presentation of character can change over the course a work, and that it often defines how audiences respond to the actions and events depicted in it is essential in a wide array of genres, and, if unaccounted for, can have disastrous results, as illustrated in the lion parable with which this dissertation began.

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